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General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Monday, 29 September 2008, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann. . . . . (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Ochir (Mongolia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Sisoulith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): First, let me express, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann, a veteran diplomat of Nicaragua, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I trust that, with him at the helm, the work of the General Assembly is in good hands.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is of the belief that the United Nations remains an important and pre-eminent forum for addressing issues related to international cooperation for economic development, peace and security, human rights and the rule of law, based on dialogue, cooperation and consensus-building amongst States. For over half a century, the United Nations has played a crucial role in maintaining international peace and security and in promoting the socio-economic advancement of Member States, especially developing countries.

Yet, as the world situation becomes ever more complex and unpredictable, the United Nations increasingly needs more robust and effective institutions. In our opinion, United Nations reform must be comprehensive, transparent, inclusive and balanced. We must strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly and revitalize its work.

We must also reform the Security Council, turning it into a more democratic and representative organ comprising new permanent and non-permanent members alike. No less important is the need to substantially reinforce the development pillars of the United Nations, which include the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the regional commissions and the United Nations Development Account, enabling them to better support developing countries.

In that context, we commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's reform efforts aimed at transforming the United Nations into a more responsive, dynamic, multifunctional and effective Organization. The Secretary-General's personal dedication to the cause of peace, and his endeavours in search of solutions to the three global crises of finance, fuel and food deserve special recognition.

The current difficult and complex situation in the field of disarmament continues to be a cause of concern. We recognize the threat posed by the continuing existence of nuclear weapons. It is hence incumbent upon the nuclear-weapon States to honour

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their unequivocal commitment to work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Renewed efforts are needed to resolve the impasse in achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects.

While globalization brings with it numerous opportunities for economic development, the obstacles that the world faces deserve significant attention. Developing countries, in particular the most vulnerable group of countries — the least developed countries landlocked developing countries and small island developing States — have taken important steps to further integrate themselves into the global economy. Nevertheless, those countries remain beleaguered by basic infrastructure of poor quality, limited access to markets, capital and new technology, and low supply of finance and investment.

The sudden increase in oil and food prices has led to a period of economic instability in many countries. To combat that problem, we stress the need for the full and effective implementation of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the establishment of a global food bank and an international food fund to ensure long-term food security for developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable among them.

In addition, the great untapped potential of those countries should be explored and exploited to the maximum extent through increased investment and technology transfer by developed countries and other development partners for mutual benefit.

The goal of achieving peace and prosperity remains the highest priority of the international community, yet inter-State conflict, terrorism and unlawful unilateral sanctions and interventions continue to impede that goal. We are greatly distressed by the persistent conflict that has plagued the lives of the peoples of the Middle East for decades, particularly of the Palestinian people, who have been fighting to exercise their right to self-determination and Statehood.

We are deeply saddened by the number of casualties and the material damage inflicted upon the nations of Iraq and Afghanistan. We remain troubled by the embargo that has been imposed on the Republic of Cuba by the Government of the United States of America, an act that is clearly illegal and not responsive to the legitimate interests of the peoples of either nation. In that regard, the Lao People's Democratic Republic sincerely urges the parties concerned in the aforementioned conflicts to seek ways to peacefully resolve their differences. It is our fervent hope that the peoples living in those conflict-affected areas may enjoy peace and prosperity as swiftly as possible.

Unlike most calamities, global warming affects not only the livelihood of every being on the planet, but also the course of human history. Climate change will become all the more worrisome as it leads to many other social and economic problems in addition to those faced by our world today. That is why there is a need for immediate global action to address climate change in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. In formulating policies to confront climate change, we should promote the integration of all three components of sustainable development — economic development, social development and environmental protection. In that respect, we call for the full implementation of the Bali Road Map.

As widely expressed at the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the lack of effective implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, remains of deep concern. Therefore, the highest priority should be given to securing the effective and full implementation of the agreed goals and commitments. In that context, we underscore the urgency of addressing the special needs of least developed and landlocked developing countries through the full, timely and effective implementation by all stakeholders of the Brussels Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action, as called for in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

Landlocked developing countries face a unique impediment in not having access to the sea. International cooperation is crucial to the success of the development goals of those countries. We therefore would like to stress the significance of the upcoming midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action, to be held on 2 and 3 October 2008 here in New York, which should provide the international community with the opportunity to assess progress made, lessons learned and constraints encountered in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

As a member country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is gratified to witness the

continuing stability resulting from strengthened and enhanced integration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is an important contribution to the maintenance of peace and further cooperation in the region and the world. A recent momentous and milestone event was the signing of the ASEAN Charter, which has transformed ASEAN into a rule-based regional organization.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic continues to enjoy solid political stability and social order. Thus, our socio-economic development has registered significant achievements, as reflected in the high and sustained growth of our gross domestic product. Notwithstanding those achievements, the Lao People's Democratic Republic still faces impediments. Rising oil prices, inflation and the global economic slowdown all stand in the way of our path to economic prosperity.

This year, we have also experienced severe flooding that has inflicted huge material losses nationwide. Yet, in spite of all that, by improving the quality of basic infrastructure and human resources and cooperating with international partners, we are determined to pursue our twin strategies of poverty eradication and regional integration. At the current pace, we hope to extricate our country from the shackles of underdevelopment by the year 2020.

I cannot conclude without reaffirming that development remains central and must come first if peace and respect for human rights, which are intertwined, are to be achieved. The Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates its unshakable commitment to continued full cooperation with the international community in pursuit of a world free from fear and want, and rooted in a new, just and equitable order. Together, I am sure, we will be able to reach new heights.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Meredov (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I warmly greet and congratulate the members of the Assembly as we begin our work at the sixty-third session.

First of all, I would like to convey to representatives and the peoples of their countries the wishes for peace and prosperity of His Excellency Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan. Allow me to congratulate the esteemed President, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, on his election to that high and responsible post and to wish him success in organizing the fruitful work of the General Assembly at this sixty-third session. Allow me also to thank Mr. Srgjan Kerim for his successful leadership of the Assembly at its previous session and for his active collaboration with the delegations.

The United Nations, which is mandated to discuss and resolve issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, is currently at one of the most critical moments in its history. That is especially evident against the background of current developments at the global and regional levels. The diversity of contemporary challenges and threats calls for the adequate preparation of a whole range of approaches to prevent them through cooperation among all Member States.

Today, we need solid measures to counter and fight such global challenges as international terrorism, human trafficking, organized crime, illegal drug trafficking and the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We are also witnessing the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. On top of that, the world community is facing global issues relating to energy and food security.

Turkmenistan is a principled and active participant in the process to identify joint actions aimed at resolving the most pressing problems of our time. In that context, we regard the need to intensify international action to ensure peace and security as a priority task. The fight against terrorism is one of the most important aspects of that problem.

Turkmenistan, as a party to major United Nations instruments to combat international terrorism and organized crime, supports the Organization's efforts to develop a global strategy to fight terrorism and stands ready to provide its practical assistance to the international community in that regard.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a pressing issue on the international agenda that is connected with ensuring peace and security. Our country plays an active role in identifying non-proliferation measures and takes practical steps for their implementation at the national and international levels. As a party to the Treaty on the

Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and other very important international legal instruments in that sphere, Turkmenistan has joined international initiatives aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In that connection, the signing of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, which was prepared and adopted under the aegis of the United Nations in 2006, has become an important element in the efforts of the world community to resolve the issue.

Today, we must all take a fresh look at the existing system for maintaining international peace and security. The current situation and emerging trends call for an adequate approach and the formulation of comprehensive measures, and the community of nations should take part in their implementation. I am confident that ongoing discussions and deliberations at this session will provide us with an opportunity to take stock of the entire panorama of the contemporary world through the prism of ensuring a safe life for States and peoples.

Undoubtedly, the General Assembly will help to consolidate efforts of Member States for the effective implementation of such measures. Turkmenistan supports close cooperation with the United Nations in adopting comprehensive measures for collective interaction to address the most pressing issues of our times. In that connection, we believe it necessary to consider qualitatively new factors in ensuring security.

Energy security has become an integral component of the global security system. The availability and accessibility of fuel and energy resources, their free delivery to international markets and effective use by consumers have become major factors in the development of the world economy as a whole.

As a major oil and natural gas producer, Turkmenistan holds a prominent place in the global energy system. In that connection, we take a highly responsible approach to developing international cooperation on the basis of our national interests and the needs of our partners. Turkmenistan's policy, of diversifying supplies of hydrocarbon materials and ensuring energy security has become an important factor in that approach. It is apparent that major investments are needed to develop an effective and stable system of global energy security and that a considerable share of those investments should be directed towards the transportation of hydrocarbons and the protection of energy infrastructure. In order to ensure adequate supplies to the world energy markets, we will also need a highly developed infrastructure of international pipeline networks.

At the same time, ensuring energy security is not simply a matter of increasing the pace of hydrocarbon extraction, developing new deposits or expanding the infrastructure for transporting and delivering energy supplies to end users. We must take into account other factors of that system, such as political stability, the situation in world markets and the presence of security guarantees for international pipelines.

Adequate security for energy infrastructure facilities also implies a decrease in their vulnerability to the impact of natural and man-made disasters, potential risks connected to changes in the military and political situation in certain regions of the world, threats from international terrorists, and the unauthorized siphoning of transported energy resources. Such problems often interrupt or reduce supplies of fuel, in particular oil and natural gas, and result in major financial losses and higher prices for energy supplies, with a negative impact on the development of the world economy.

Therefore, it has become increasingly urgent to coordinate the efforts of States to establish a unified system of energy security. To that end, we must develop an appropriate international legal framework and effective partnership mechanisms, including for the protection of energy transportation systems. It appears that this problem affects us all, be they energy producers, transit countries or consumers.

On that basis, Turkmenistan has launched an initiative aimed at elaborating, under United Nations auspices, a unique document defining the legal basis and security guarantees for the functioning of international pipelines. As a preliminary step towards implementing that initiative, Turkmenistan has prepared a draft resolution on the reliability of energy transit and its role in ensuring stable economic development and international cooperation, which is being proposed for consideration at the sixty-third session of the Assembly. Support for that draft resolution may provide a good stepping stone for the future and demonstrate the principled readiness of the world community seriously to resolve those issues. In that context, Turkmenistan is prepared to organize in

2009 an international conference on that problem under United Nations auspices in Ashgabat, our country's capital.

This year has witnessed an important event in the life of Central Asia that, I believe, may have a considerable positive impact on the situation in the region. I mean by that the commencement of the functioning of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. The inauguration of the Centre gave an impetus to the new stage of strategic partnership of Central Asian countries with the United Nations in undertaking a set of measures aimed at preventing conflicts and eliminating their underlying causes.

We consider the inauguration of the Centre as testimony of the great attention that the world community devotes to the processes occurring in Central Asia, clear understanding of the role and importance of our region in global international affairs and a desire to provide utmost positive assistance in tackling regional problems. In the long run, that activity will be aimed at achieving the long-term goal of ensuring the security, stability and sustainable development of the States and peoples of the Central Asian region.

Moreover, we believe that close interaction of neighbouring countries is one of the most decisive factors. In that context, by closely adhering to its international obligations as a permanently neutral State, Turkmenistan stands for developing good-neighbourly cooperation with all the countries of the region.

In that connection, Turkmenistan provides economic and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and actively supports the efforts of the international community to restore peaceful life in that fraternal country. We would like to see Afghanistan as a peaceful and prosperous nation, a good neighbour and partner of all the States in the region.

The issue of the Caspian Sea has acquired special relevance in the context of regional stability and economic cooperation. Moreover, its comprehensive consideration envisages the solution of problems relating to the establishment of an international legal basis for cooperation, as well as large-scale development of the geo-economic potential of the Caspian region as a major energy basin and transportation crossroads between East and West, South and North. For some States in the region that do not have direct access to international sea communications, the Caspian Sea is the most important route to the world markets.

In that regard, effective activity in the Caspian Sea is directly linked to the enhancement of security in the adjacent region. Turkmenistan advocates that the Caspian area should be a zone of peace, stability and effective international cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and a partnership of equality.

Being an integral part of the international community, Turkmenistan sees its future in the development of a truly democratic society, in which every individual person, his or her rights and freedoms and the all-round development of his or her potential represent the main value and measure of the country's progress. Just a few days ago, Turkmenistan witnessed a major political event — the adoption of the new version of its constitution, which laid down the legal basis for the development of national statehood and the further democratization of social life. In particular, the constitution considerably broadens the powers of the parliament as the country's main legislative body. In addition, it expands the role of local bodies of government and self-government, in whose work citizens take an active part on a broad representative basis.

Democratization is a natural process of development of any State and society, and in that connection, the strengthening of a democratic, secular and law-based State is our own conscientious sovereign decision, and we will steadfastly follow this course.

The foreign policy of Turkmenistan is determined by the national interests of our State and its people, and its main goal is civilized development on the basis of positive integration into global political and economic processes. Therefore, cooperation with the United Nations is the strategic direction of our foreign policy, and the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter serve for us as the basis for the development of Turkmenistan's relations with other States.

We view the United Nations as a universal international organization, serving as the main guarantor of the global security system and the framework of the present and future world order. We advocate that international law and the United Nations Charter and their principles of respect for the sovereignty of every nation and its choice of its own

way of development and non-interference in internal affairs should remain the basis of the world order and the alpha and omega of relations among nations.

On that basis, Turkmenistan determines its view to its partnership with the United Nations and states its interest in strengthening and expanding its role in the system of international relations, especially with regard to the consolidation of the efforts of Member States to ensure peace and security on Earth.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Andrei Stratan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Stratan (Republic of Moldova): At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the high and responsible position of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session and to pledge our full support and assistance as Vice-President of the General Assembly.

Our world is facing major problems and challenges that demand a strengthened and revitalized Organization capable of addressing global issues. From that perspective, the Republic of Moldova fully supports the United Nations reform process in accordance with the main directions reflected in the final document of the 2005 World Summit (resolution 60/1), subsequent initiatives of the Secretary-General and resolutions adopted on key aspects of the reform of the Organization's structures and management.

We support strengthening the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council in developing global economic and social policies, promoting dialogue and intensifying cooperation with international financial, economic and trade institutions and Governments in attaining the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the Council's involvement in addressing humanitarian crisis situations and issues related to post-conflict reconstruction.

The decision to launch intergovernmental negotiations will bring a new impetus to Security Council reform and will stimulate and increase the efficiency of United Nations activities in the field of international security and peacekeeping, including through developing cooperation with regional organizations and Member States in identifying solutions to conflicts in different parts of the world.

The events that occurred in South Ossetia, Georgia, have proved once again that frozen conflicts generate instability and threaten regional and international security. The Republic of Moldova subscribed to the European Union (EU) declaration regarding the degradation of the situation in South Ossetia, delivered at the extraordinary meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on 8 August 2008, and calls for the full implementation of the peace plan mediated under the French presidency of the EU. At the same time, categorically rejecting all methods of settlement by force, including those used to ensure territorial integrity, the Moldovan Government does not consider that international recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia will stabilize the situation.

In the specific case of the Transdniestrian conflict, the Republic of Moldova acted and continues to act in accordance with the law on basic provisions of the special legal status of the localities on the left bank of the Nistru River which was adopted unanimously on 22 July 2005 and which provides for resolution of the Transdniestrian conflict by political means only.

Believing that demilitarization and democratization of the Transdniestrian region are essential to a viable resolution of the conflict, the President of the Republic of Moldova has advanced a number of initiatives on security for and confidence-building between both banks of the Nistru River.

A strategy for conflict resolution based on a complex approach consisting of packaged proposals for all conflict-related issues — political, economic, social and humanitarian — has been adopted. It envisages a special legal status for the Transdniestrian region that includes respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, consolidation of the neutrality status, withdrawal of foreign troops from the country's territory and recognition of ownership rights and firm guarantees for the population.

At the same time, the activities of the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) and its close cooperation with the relevant institutions in charge of border management in both States have contributed to increased security and transparency at the border, which creates a more favourable atmosphere for settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict. At present our efforts, as well as those of mediators and observers, are directed to

resuming negotiations in the Five plus two format with a view to a final resolution of that conflict.

The Assembly's review meeting to assess the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, on 4 September 2008, emphasized both the progress registered by the United Nations and its Member States during the last years and the deficiencies in the fight against international terrorism. In that context, I would like to reaffirm that as a party to 13 international conventions and other, regional and bilateral treaties in that field, the Government of the Republic of Moldova continues to take concrete steps in fighting terrorism in accordance with the provisions of those instruments, relevant Security Council resolutions and national documents, including the National Strategy for Preventing and Fighting Money-Laundering and Terrorism Funding.

The Republic of Moldova will further undertake all possible steps for contributing to United Nations actions in consolidating international legislation in the field of countering international terrorism, especially in view of the finalizing of the development and adoption of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism and organization of the high-level conference on terrorism under United Nations auspices. We consider that in the framework of those activities, increased attention should be given to the issues related to fighting terrorism that is fuelled by separatist tendencies that affect States' sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Climate change is an inherent challenge for sustainable development. Global warming and its effects, including natural disasters and food and energy crises, have become major threats for the global population and for international security. After the terrible drought of last year — the consequences of which we are still overcoming — the Republic of Moldova was hit this summer by the most serious floods of the last two centuries, which affected over 10,000 hectares of agricultural and private lands, destroyed hundreds of houses and other buildings and caused damages exceeding $120 million.

We would like to express our gratitude for the assistance provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs by other specialized institutions, including the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF, and by Member States to alleviate the consequences of the floods.

The Republic of Moldova fully supports the activity of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, established and headed by the Secretary-General. Development and implementation of a comprehensive plan for food security, in cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, would constitute an important step for overcoming the food crisis.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova is undertaking concrete action with a view to reducing the impact of the food crisis on the situation in the country. At present, a national agriculture and food security programme is being developed. We consider that the high-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals held on 25 September and the organization of annual meetings on monitoring the engagement and implementation of those goals constitute new and important opportunities for implementing the achievement of all internationally accepted development objectives. Their implementation is still possible in the majority of countries if consolidated actions directed towards concrete results are established and continuously sustained and developed until the year 2015.

The progress achieved with the support of the European Union (EU) in the implementation of the Moldova-EU Action Plan and in conforming the national standards to the European standards has opened new opportunities for the advancement of Moldovan-European relations. We highly appreciate the constructive cooperation with the EU in that process and continue to rely on the assistance of its member States in ensuring development and the gradual integration of our country into the European Union.

At the same time, we rely on the support and the opportunities offered by the United Nations and Member States with a view to promoting the political, social and economic policies of the country and its European integration aspirations and to ensuring settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict, withdrawal of foreign military troops and accomplishment of the development priorities of the country.

I would like to reiterate the attachment of the Republic of Moldova to the ideals of the United Nations and its commitment to continuously cooperate

with Member States towards achieving the important objectives of the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Rita Kieber-Beck, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein.

Mrs. Kieber-Beck (Liechtenstein): Since we gathered here a year ago, the world has experienced many serious challenges. Natural disasters, climate change, violent conflicts, terrorism, human rights violations, rising food and energy prices and financial turmoil have affected the lives of people worldwide. Dealing with crisis after crisis is a daunting task. Without the United Nations, it would in many respects be a hopeless one.

Indeed, it is the United Nations that gives hope to people around the world and it is the United Nations that gives political leaders a unique tool to solve problems and to settle conflicts. It was created more than sixty years ago, under the still-fresh impression of the horrors of the Second World War and with a strong focus on matters of peace and security. Today, the world is a different place, and yet we must keep turning to the United Nations to solve our problems together and to protect those most in need and danger.

We applaud the Secretary-General and the dedicated United Nations personnel for their hard work. Nevertheless, the Organization is sometimes mired in bureaucracy, inefficiency and political infighting. But the blame falls mainly on us, the Member States. It is our responsibility to adapt the United Nations to today's challenges and to make it the best possible organization to that end. We must equip the Organization with the resources it needs and make the necessary adjustments in its structure.

In recent years, the regular budget of the Organization has grown in a completely lopsided way. Core activities, such as conflict prevention, the promotion of human rights and the rule of law, humanitarian assistance and support for economic and social development, are subject to an artificial policy of zero budget growth and must be financed largely through voluntary contributions. At the same time, States have come to routinely accept massive increases in peacekeeping bills. It is high time that we shift our focus from fighting fires to preventing their outbreak. We therefore fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General to enhance the conflict prevention and mediation capacities of the Secretariat.

The session just concluded brought about a sobering realization that some of the reform processes initiated at the 2005 World Summit have effectively come to a halt. Others have yet to be the subject of extremely difficult negotiations. We believe that quick progress is necessary on a number of management reform issues, from human resource management to accountability and internal justice. We will also continue our work to achieve a more legitimate and more effective Security Council. To that end, we will step up our efforts to enhance the involvement and access of those who are not members of the Council.

Liechtenstein is a strong believer in multilateralism and in a rule-based international system. Our national sovereignty is grounded in international law and its observance, and we are therefore strongly committed to the rule of law. Those principles were chief among our motivations for joining the United Nations 18 years ago, and they have been high among our priorities as a Member ever since.

The rule of law has gained much prominence in the work of the United Nations over the past few years, but it has yet to take the central place that is its due. The most precious asset of this Organization remains the legitimacy that it lends to decisions of the international community. In fact, the United Nations symbolizes the rule of law in international relations. We must preserve that strength and therefore also promote the rule of law within United Nations organs, including the Security Council, and their decision-making.

Together with other countries, we have expressed long-standing concerns about the current practice of the Security Council regarding sanctions listing and delisting, in particular in the area of counter-terrorism. There should be no doubt that we fully support the sanctions regimes, which constitute powerful tools for the maintenance of international peace and security, but we also believe that the procedures applied must be in accordance with basic international standards of due process. Recent court decisions indicate that our reservations are well founded, and we hope that our proposals will contribute to the improvement of the system. We must avoid the impression that decisions of the Security Council might be in violation of human rights standards.

All of our countries, and the Security Council in particular, are also called to task in the fight against

impunity. Since the 1990s, the Council has adopted a number of landmark decisions to enforce international criminal law, including the decision to establish international and mixed tribunals. The Council also has an important role to play in connection with the International Criminal Court, which deals with the most serious crimes under international law. The Council did so in adopting resolution 1593 (2005), and it is essential that it continue to exercise responsibly its powers under the Rome Statute.

Mr. Stratan (Republic of Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The International Criminal Court is the most important achievement in decades in the area of international law. Now we must make it work in practice and give it the necessary political support. The success of the Court will be the yardstick in the fight against impunity. If we want to win that fight, we must show resolve by supporting the Court.

Years ago, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the International Criminal Court was given jurisdiction over that crime 50 years later. The Convention was born of the desire to prevent the recurrence of genocide, yet it failed to achieve that purpose on several occasions following its adoption. The rallying cry "Never Again!" can be used only so often before it loses credibility. In that spirit, all of us agreed to the concept of the responsibility to protect when we met at the summit level three years ago. For us and for many others, that was one of the most significant gains achieved in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, which was otherwise a mixed bag. Still, we are struggling with the challenge to make the concept widely understood and to apply it in practice.

The responsibility to protect is a narrow concept that is limited to clearly defined cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It is based on the sovereign responsibility of States to protect their own populations as well as the United Nations Charter. We must maintain that conceptual clarity and provide for consistent implementation of the Summit decision.

In spite of the lofty aspirations expressed at the 2005 World Summit, we are still far from taking a common approach to the development agenda, and the challenges are growing rapidly. Climate change, the food crisis, the energy crisis and the faltering international financial system are just a few examples. All those challenges hit particularly hard those who already live in poverty, and they also threaten to undermine the effectiveness of our development cooperation. We therefore need a consensus on financing for development that builds on the Monterrey Consensus. Such an agreement will require significant sacrifices and compromises on all sides, and it is sorely needed to strengthen the development pillar of multilateral cooperation.

Let me say in conclusion that we have always stood and fought for a strong General Assembly. By that, we do not mean an Assembly that develops an antagonistic relationship with other organs of the United Nations. We want an Assembly that is a forum for meaningful and focused discussions on topics of high relevance, followed by clear decisions and their implementation. We hope that this session will allow us to take a step in that direction.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Yeo (Singapore): The collapse of the recent Doha talks is deeply troubling. The Doha Development Round was the first round of talks to be launched after the end of the cold war.

Two years after the failed start at Seattle, it was launched again two months after 11 September 2001, when member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) felt a strong sense of common cause. Since then, however, progress has been painfully difficult. I remember WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy telling me that not enough countries felt a sense of responsibility for the global trading system. The recent setback in Geneva means that it will be some time before the Doha Development Round can be concluded.

During the Cold War, the United States and the European Union effectively led the global trading system of the non-communist world. In 1994, the Uruguay Round was finally concluded after United States and European negotiators struck a bargain at Blair House, much to the unhappiness of many countries that felt excluded but went along nonetheless. For the Doha Development Agenda, however, a number of developing country members were determined that this should not happen again.

Brazil played a leading role in forming the Group of Twenty (G-20) coalition of countries, including India and China. At the Cancún talks in September 2003, the G-20 became a grouping whose position could not be ignored, altering the traditional dynamics of multilateral trade negotiations. When the talks failed in July, it was apparently over the issues of agricultural safeguards for China and India, but even if a compromise over safeguards had been possible, United States cotton subsidies, which were next on the agenda, would still have been a major sticking point.

The failure of the Geneva talks comes at a time when the global economy is rapidly slowing down. Many of us worry that the downturn will be severe because of the collapse of huge asset bubbles inflated over many years by loose monetary policies. Protectionist pressures will now build up in many countries. A rise in trade protectionism could reduce global welfare by many billions of dollars. Our collective efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have become much harder.

Who takes responsibility for the global trading system? Who takes responsibility for the global system? While on paper the 153 WTO members make decisions by consensus, the reality is that a small group of countries has to take the lead to keep the multilateral trading system moving in the right direction. On no major issue confronting the human family can decisions be taken without the major countries taking the lead. The challenge of climate change, for example, cannot be tackled without the major emitters coming to some broad agreement on the way forward. If the Doha Round, despite being a positive-sum game, is so difficult to conclude, it is hard to be optimistic that a United Nations agreement on climate change can be negotiated quickly without the exercise of strong leadership by the United States, Europe, Russia, China, India, Japan and Brazil. If they could not or would not exercise such leadership on global trade, can we expect them to do so on climate change?

The emerging multipolar reality of the twenty-first century is a fact that we have to face squarely. International institutions like the United Nations can only function well when we accept that reality and work with it. As a small country, Singapore accepts that while all countries, big or small, have a single vote each, we do not all carry the same weight. Small countries need the United Nations and other international institutions to protect our interests, and we therefore have every interest in making sure that those institutions are effective. They can work well only if the world's multipolar reality is taken into account. The Forum of Small States, which is an informal grouping of more than half the United Nations membership, takes a realistic view of global politics because that is the only way to secure our own interests.

Recent developments in the Balkans and Caucasus do not bode well for the future. After the crimes committed against the Kosovar people in the 1990s, many countries expressed sympathy and supported some form of autonomy for them. However, Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in February was greeted with a certain discomfort because of the precedent it set for other parts of the world. I remember Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) foreign ministers discussing Kosovo at our retreat in Singapore in February. While we supported autonomy for the Kosovar people, we felt it premature to recognize Kosovo's independence at that point in time. There was strong preference for the issue to be resolved by the United Nations.

Russia's recent recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent States is also unsettling. Some analysts see it as Russia's response to western support for Kosovo's independence. While the issue of Kosovo and the disputes in South Ossetia and Abkhazia are different and should not be directly linked, we do have a common concern, which is the role of the United Nations in conferring legitimacy on new States. If this century is to be peaceful, it is crucial that all countries, big and small, abjure violence and adhere to the Charter of the United Nations and to the international rule of law.

The relaxation of tensions across the Taiwan Straits in the past few months serves as a positive example of how intractable problems from the past can be creatively transcended with wisdom, goodwill and patience. Sometimes impatience is its own worst enemy. After 90 years, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire has left some problems still unresolved in parts of its former domain. We cannot expect all the issues thrown up by the end of the cold war and the break-up of the Soviet Union to be quickly overcome. What we know is that, without the United Nations setting acceptable norms of behaviour, there will be many more problems in the world and some of the problems

we now face will become far worse. Universally agreed human rights are important precisely because they underpin those norms of good behaviour.

However, the realpolitik of big Power rivalry cannot simply be wished away; indeed, it has been part of the human condition for most of our history. However, we can confine that rivalry and, by a combination of pressures, prevent any Power from pushing its claim excessively. International institutions like the United Nations play a civilizing role in such efforts. International institutions cannot stop big Power rivalry, but they can channel it and ensure that the common interests of the human family are not completely disregarded.

For that reason, the smaller countries have a strong vested interest in seeing international institutions strengthened. The reform of the United Nations to take into account the changes in the world since the end of the Second World War is an absolute necessity; so, too, is reform of the other Bretton Woods institutions. Either we reform them to forestall crises or we wait for crises to force change upon us. For example, if the present global economic downturn is the once-in-a-century event Alan Greenspan talked about, then bringing China and India into the Group of Eight and making the International Monetary Fund and World Bank more representative of the global economy today become matters of urgency.

We can also make international institutions more effective by partnership with regional institutions. Every region has its own distinctive characteristics which must be taken into account.

When Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in May, there was for many precious days a stand-off between the Myanmar Government and the international community over the provision of assistance. Western warships bearing relief supplies were viewed with suspicion by a Government that saw not the supplies but a military threat. It was absurd that such suspicions got in the way of soldiers helping cyclone victims in the Irrawaddy Delta. ASEAN had to step in and build a bridge of trust between the Myanmar Government and the international community. A tripartite organization involving the United Nations, ASEAN and the Myanmar Government worked effectively day by day to overcome problems on the ground and ensure that international aid reached the furthest corners of the affected area. That prevented a second wave of deaths from hunger or disease. ASEAN on its own did not have the capabilities to help Myanmar in a major way, but ASEAN working together with the United Nations and other international agencies was able to make a huge difference.

With globalization, there has been a mushrooming of regional institutions around the world. Some have come to play useful roles in fostering regional peace and development. The United Nations and other international agencies can multiply their effectiveness by working closely with such regional institutions.

While international and regional institutions can provide a more conducive environment, the key to a country's development is its own good governance. Because every country has its own unique history, there is no universal model of development applicable to all countries. Every country must find its own road to the future.

At the closing of the Olympic Games in Beijing, the President of the International Olympic Committee, Jacques Rogge, described China's hosting of the Games as truly exceptional. Indeed, from beginning to end, the organization was superb — from the spectacular opening ceremony to the hospitality extended to individual delegations. Everyone was impressed, and rightly so. That was a Chinese dream come true, and the world doffed its hat to the achievement of the Chinese people. Thirty years ago, all that would have been inconceivable, even to the Chinese themselves. What has changed? Good governance and the right policies in place have unleashed the natural talents of over a billion people.

India, with a different history and political system, is also making remarkable progress. Here again, the right policies, introduced less than 20 years ago, have made a profound difference. Indeed, across all of Asia, from the Bering Straits to the Gulf, an ancient continent, encompassing more than half the world's population, is stirring again. Although highly diverse, the countries of Asia are being reconnected by a new East-West trade in a new age of globalization. To be sure, not all are doing well. Among those that are, and they are many, a recent report by the Commission on Growth and Development, chaired by Nobel laureate Michael Spence, identified effective government as a critical factor. In a surprising departure from Western conventional wisdom, the

report did not see democracy as either a necessary or a sufficient condition, at least not in the initial phase of economic take-off.

That is an important insight which can help the work of international and regional institutions in promoting national development. If we set as our objective the promotion of democracy, the reaction among many countries will instinctively be negative. However, if we set as our objective the promotion of effective government, our task will be much easier. Let each country, after having achieved a certain level of development, then evolve the form of democracy best suited to its culture and history. In a recent speech, President of the World Bank Robert Zoellick hit it on the head when he emphasized that the strategic centre of gravity is to build legitimacy through good and effective governance.

However, for development to take place, there must be peace. Without continuing peace in Asia, we will not be able to realize the promise of this century. The thoughtful manner in which the United States is managing its strategic relationship with a rising China and India is of decisive importance. It is rare in history for new Powers to emerge without conflict. China and India are becoming responsible stakeholders in the global system. That many of the sons and daughters of Chinese and Indian leaders choose to study in American universities gives us reason to be cautiously optimistic about the future of Asia.

We cannot stop rivalry among the big Powers, but we can limit the harm that rivalry does to smaller countries. In fact, smaller countries can turn the emerging multipolarity to advantage if we combine our strengths in regional and international institutions. Among those, the most important is, of course, the United Nations.

We still need global leadership, but it has to be by a new concert of big Powers going beyond the United States, Europe and Japan. It has to be a new kind of leadership exercised in a transparent manner through both hard and soft power, and preferably through regional and international institutions. Writing about the Beijing Olympics in *The Wall Street Journal* on 26 August, Tony Blair said: "The truth is that nothing in the twenty-first century will work well without China's full engagement". The same can be said of Russia, India and Brazil. While the United States will long remain dominant, a more inclusive global arrangement will make this a better and safer world for all of us.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abubakr Al-Qirbi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Qirbi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to start by congratulating Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann on being elected to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I am certain that he will steer the work of this session wisely and successfully, and we wish him every success in his work. I also wish to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, and thank him for his constructive efforts and the results that he achieved at the sixty-second session. On the occasion of the feast of Ramadan, I wish to extend my warmest greetings to the Islamic community and to all States of the world. May that feast bring prosperity, peace and security to all.

Without doubt, representatives closely monitored the terrorist acts perpetrated on the United States embassy, which were combated by our courageous Yemeni security forces. While we join the international community and the Security Council in condemning that terrorist act, we welcome the readiness of many countries to work on a daily basis to counter terrorism. We hope that such positive attitudes will translate into genuine support that will enhance human development projects and enable Yemen to overcome poverty by also strengthening the Yemeni security forces, so that they can play an effective role alongside the international community in countering terrorism. We also need increased cooperation and coordination among security and intelligence services at the international level so as to close all the gaps that have enabled terrorists to continue their destructive activities, which are alien to the values of religion and human morals.

Because of the exorbitant costs that we have had to bear in the field of security, Yemen has paid a heavy toll in terms of lives and material damage in the anti-terrorist activities that we undertake. Terrorist activities carried out by Al-Qaida and Islamic jihad elements, as well as by rebel movements, have caused tremendous economic losses of over $2 billion to the Yemeni Government and impeded the implementation of development projects and Government measures to reduce poverty. We therefore call on donor States, international organizations and Yemen's partners in

counter-terrorism to assist Yemen generously and to help it carry out the development projects and poverty-reduction programmes that are key components in countering terrorism, especially since terrorists exploit poverty, need and ignorance to polarize people and recruit individuals.

In the war on terrorism, in its various forms, many people have falsely found a pretext to mobilize against the Muslim religion, since Islam is the religion of dialogue, tolerance and moderation. In that connection, the Republic of Yemen fully supports the initiative of His Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia with regard to dialogue among religions — an initiative that attracted great attention at the Madrid conference. There is also a crucial need to fight terrorism around the world by reviewing counter-terrorism mechanisms so that the war on terror will not harm the lives of innocent citizens and cause human rights violations.

The Republic of Yemen, which is one of the least developed countries, continues to progress towards democratization through political plurality and freedom of expression, and is striving to promote the role of non-governmental organizations and civil society and the principle of the peaceful sharing of power. Yemen is moving from a local administration system to one of local governance that grants broad prerogatives in the area of decentralization and power-sharing. Parliamentary elections will take place in 2009 with the participation of various political parties. The Republic of Yemen, in that regard, intends to take all measures to safeguard the integrity of those elections, complying with international standards and welcoming the participation of international observers.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place in difficult international circumstances, with a new cold war threatening to return to the world and to undermine global peace and stability. We believe that this important international forum should be an instrument for resolving all issues and challenges and their implications for international relations. We trust that, through dialogue, non-interference in the internal affairs of countries and respect for the interests of all, we will be able to prevent a return to the age of alliances, because the world now has a crucial need for international cooperation in a spirit of pluralism and partnership instead of further tension and polarization.

The changes on the international scene are multiple. The most important facets are related to the international economic situation, which has confronted us with a number of unprecedented challenges. Among those challenges is the severe shortage of foodstuffs, the increase in the cost of food internationally and the rise in energy prices. Those acute crises threaten to affect the economies of poor countries, in particular by increasing the number of hungry people around the world. They are further compounded by industrial States' growing use of biofuels, which poses a threat to the world's current food reserves. While we agree that biofuels do help to reduce damage from global warming, that equation might change entirely if we were to take into account the potential effect on a large proportion of the world's population, who may be facing famine. Food must be produced in the interests of the mass of humanity.

Poor countries are facing a major challenge because of the increase in the prices of food and energy. Whenever there are glimmers of hope on the horizon for developing countries, they find themselves facing new obstacles to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There can be no doubt that, in order to address such difficulties, we need increased international solidarity and cooperation. We call on the major economic Powers and countries that produce energy and food to fully shoulder their responsibilities vis-à-vis the poorest countries and to help them to achieve development and the MDGs adopted by this Assembly in 2000.

The difficult humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people, whose rights continue to be denied and trampled by Israel, is a source of grave concern for us. Moreover, Israel's expansionist policies of building illegal settlements on Palestinian and Syrian territories and of the racist separation wall in the West Bank, which have been condemned by the international community and the International Criminal Court, are creating further problems and placing new obstacles in the path of the peace process in the Middle East. We call on all parties, including the Quartet, to act to build a climate favourable to the restoration of trust among the parties concerned in the peace process so as to attain comprehensive and just peace.

It is high time to put an end to the procrastination policies of Israel. We greatly deplore the fact that Israeli occupation forces are committing offences in the holy sites in Jerusalem, which are among the most sacred to Muslims. We warn the occupying Israeli forces not to persist in such measures because, besides

their potential impact on the peace process, they may also have uncontrollable and unforeseeable consequences. We believe it essential to adopt resolutions without delay to provide for the protection of the holy places and religious symbols, whatever they may be, while firmly condemning any prejudice or damage that may be done to them.

We warmly welcome the positive developments in Iraq. We also welcome the improved security situation and hope to see greater political stability in that fraternal country. From this rostrum, we welcome measures taken by the Iraqi Government to establish a timetable to end the presence of coalition forces on Iraqi territory as a major step towards its recovery of security, peace and stability and in order to protect its Arab identity and strengthen its national unity and role in the region.

We are also closely monitoring with great satisfaction the positive results achieved in Lebanon and the work being carried out by the Arab Group under the auspices of sisterly Qatar. We hope that the agreement between the various Lebanese parties and between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon will also be successful. Security and stability must be strengthened in that region, and we hope that those agreements will play an important role in enhancing prosperity and peace for our neighbours in Iraq and Lebanon.

The Republic of Yemen is deeply concerned by attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the Sudan, and we reaffirm the importance of respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of that country. We call on the international community to fully assume its responsibilities in Darfur, and we encourage dialogue between the Sudanese Government and the various factions, considering any party that rejects dialogue and reconciliation and that resorts to violence to be a terrorist entity imperilling peace and stability. We also welcome the African and Arab efforts to resolve the Darfur problem and to nullify the negative impact of the decision of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. We once again express our repudiation of politicized decisions by international judicial and humanitarian organizations that infringe on the sovereignty of States and interfere in their internal affairs.

Instability in Somalia has negatively affected countries of the region and is threatening the safety and security of navigation in international waters, as a result of the worsening phenomenon of piracy.

As members are aware, the number of refugees is constantly rising. Those refugees, who number approximately 500,000, have come to Yemen from the Horn of Africa. Millions in Somalia and in the Horn of Africa are threatened by famine, which could increase the number of refugees and thus the burden borne by the Government of Yemen. Therefore, we call for greater international support to help Yemen cope with the waves of refugees and to help Yemeni coast guard forces to combat piracy.

The situation in Somalia poses a challenge to the international community and requires serious efforts to achieve peace and security for the Somali people in order to enhance security and stability in the Horn of Africa. In that connection, we welcome Ethiopia's readiness to withdraw its forces from Somalia and reaffirm the need to deploy international forces to restore stability there. We also call on all Somali parties to seek reconciliation and end their disputes, bearing in mind the interests of the Somali people, and we urge all external actors to refrain from interfering in Somalia's internal affairs.

My delegation stresses the need to continue the process of United Nations reform. We reaffirm our resolve to join all other countries of the world in contributing effectively to the attainment of that objective. We believe that such reform is necessary and important and that all must join in the efforts to achieve it. Of particular importance is reform of the Security Council, which should not be limited to expanding its membership, but should ultimately result in more rational use of the right of veto so that it can no longer be used to block resolutions approved by the vast majority of the membership.

In closing, on behalf of Yemen, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his unstinting support, efforts and guidance at the head of the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Salah Bashir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Bashir (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I wish him every success in leading us as we work to strengthen the role

of the United Nations in promoting international relations in the spirit of the Charter, which is the most important international pillar of the rule of law. I also thank his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for his good efforts to ensure the success of the previous session. In addition, I wish to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his efforts to reform the Organization so that it can play a more effective role in addressing emerging global challenges.

In his introductory statement on 16 September 2008 (see A/63/PV.1), the day he assumed the presidency of the Assembly, Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann referred to many important political and humanitarian issues. For example, he mentioned the need to improve United Nations organs to enable them to adapt to the major changes that have occurred in the international sphere in the 63 years since the Organization was established following the Second World War. He also stated that the Organization should be improved so that it can better address the accelerated changes that have taken place since the end of the cold war and the era of polarization — changes whose effects have begun to be felt over the past two decades.

In that context, Jordan believes it is essential to revitalize the role of the General Assembly as envisaged in the Charter, so that the international decision-making process can be further democratized. Jordan supports the trend towards rebalancing the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council.

A week ago, at the 5th meeting, the Secretary-General introduced his report on the work of the Organization (A/63/1), in which he assessed the world situation. In the report, he made clear that we face challenges that encompass all human activities, transcending individual countries and regions. Hence, we must examine the dangers posed by those challenges — many of which have their roots in ideology and similar motivations — in order to find appropriate solutions and move effectively forward together. Among the challenges cited by the Secretary-General are the lack of progress in international trade negotiations, high energy costs and basic food prices and climate change. While we support the Secretary-General's assessment, we should like to add that additional challenges are posed by continued military occupation, denial of the rights of peoples to self-determination and freedom of expression, the growing crisis of intercultural conflict and the scourge of international terrorism and extremism.

The most important role being played by the United Nations in the Middle East region has been and remains that of the custodian of international law. On the one hand, it governs international relations and is the standard by which we measure progress made in the international community; on the other, it embodies a strong, objective approach to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Because of our strong belief in the role of the United Nations, we view the Organization as the basic framework for finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, putting an end to the occupation of Arab lands and redressing the injustices suffered by the Palestinian people. For decades, the Arab States have taken many initiatives and made many proposals, based on international legitimacy, to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict so that the Palestinians can be liberated from Israeli occupation and can live in dignity in their own homeland.

To that end, in 2002 the Arab States jointly submitted a comprehensive Arab Peace Initiative. It sought to end the 60-year-old conflict as well as Israel's occupation of Arab lands — Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories — since 1967, in exchange for a comprehensive peace that would include mutual recognition between Israel and the Arab States, including the State of Palestine, and the establishment of normal relations between them. The Arab Peace Initiative was and continues to be an open and clear invitation to Israel to become part of our region without conditions or restrictions.

While the Initiative was widely welcomed by the nations of the world and was adopted by 57 States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Israel ignored it and began to build the wall of separation, in defiance of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, and intensified its settlement activities, which threaten its chances to make peace with the Palestinian people and the Arabs.

The President took the Chair.

The efforts of the Quartet are essential to move the political process forward and to find a solution that, in accordance with international legitimacy, ends the Israeli occupation, dismantles the settlements, fulfils the aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish

their own State in their homeland, including East Jerusalem, and enables the refugees to return to their homes and villages, from which they were expelled in 1948.

From this rostrum, Jordan affirms that it supports the negotiations that resumed at Annapolis and values the strategic option of peace reaffirmed in the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution. At the same time, we believe that the challenges faced by the negotiations as we approach the end of the year require the international community to demand that the parties to the negotiations meet their commitments and that the Quartet make further efforts to achieve the desired results regarding final status negotiations and the fulfilment of the Road Map obligations.

The final months of 2008 will be a critical period in the course of those negotiations. Therefore, it is imperative that Israel have the political will to resolve the ongoing conflict, after more than six decades. In addition, the Palestinian people should be supported on their own land and the Palestinian National Authority should be strengthened to help it to continue fulfilling its obligations, improving the conditions for Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories and building State institutions. That also requires Palestinians to bridge their differences against the backdrop of the Arab Peace Initiative and to promote the position of the Palestinian National Authority both on the international scene and in the context of the negotiations.

While all parties strive to reach a final solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel continues its illegal practices of seizing Arab land in order to change the demographic make-up of the occupied territories through the building of settlements and the separation wall, and changing the status of Jerusalem, in clear violation of international law, the principles of international legitimacy and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Recent speed in building Israeli settlements threatens to erode all progress achieved so far in the peace process.

We reject all Israeli measures that aim to create a new status quo in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in East Jerusalem, including threats to the Islamic and Arab character of the holy city. We reaffirm that Israeli violations in the holy city, and particularly in the Bab al-Magharibah area, contradict the norms of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention, The Hague Convention of 1954, as well as the July 2008 decision of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. As Jordan has played a historic role in the supervision and maintenance of Islamic holy places in Jerusalem, we call upon Israel to comply with its pledges and obligations and to put an end to those illegal practices.

Unless there is justice for the Palestinian people, our region will be subjected to a long era of destabilization. But ours will not be the only region affected by that destabilization, because the feelings of injustice, disappointment and anger will increase as a result of stagnation in the peace process. This will fuel extremism in its various forms and manifestations and will be used as a pretext by those who would like to destabilize the region and the world beyond.

I would like to congratulate the brotherly people of Lebanon on having achieved national reconciliation, on the election of a President and the formation of a Government of national unity. I also congratulate them on embarking on an extensive and profound process of national dialogue aimed at strengthening Lebanese State institutions and seeking ways to defend Lebanese territory and sovereignty.

Concerning Iraq, we welcome the remarkable progress made in that brotherly country and the improvement of the situation at all levels. Jordan recently reopened and adequately staffed its embassy in Baghdad. His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan recently visited the brotherly country of Iraq; his visit was widely welcomed at the Arab and international levels. We encourage all channels of political and economic communication between Iraq and other Arab countries, and we encourage the Iraqi Government to continue its approach to developing channels of national reconciliation in order to build upon the progress achieved so far in the areas of politics and security. Such progress encourages Iraqis to return to their country from neighbouring States and the building of a society based on political diversity and free of sectarianism, factionalism and other harms to society.

Making the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction is a prerequisite for ensuring the peace and stability of the region. In 1970, based on our belief in and support for the preventive goals of nuclear non-proliferation, we, joined other countries in

the world and the region, with the exception of Israel, in acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We call upon the international community and influential States to bring pressure to bear in order to ensure accession by all countries to that international Treaty in order to achieve a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with international agreements, and to put an end to nuclear military programmes in the region once and for all.

Concerning the Iranian nuclear issue, we believe that every nation should exercise its right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. But, at the same time, we call for a resolution of that issue, based on a peaceful approach and on negotiations. In that regard, Jordan attaches great importance to promoting security and stability in the Arabian Gulf area in accordance with the principles of international legitimacy, good-neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. We welcome any effective contribution by Arab States that would maintain undiminished security and stability in our region.

Jordan and the whole region have suffered from the scourge of international terrorism. That has made us more vigilant, cautious and determined to effectively combat terrorism with a view to eradicating it. Jordan upholds international counter-terrorism conventions and values international cooperation in that area. We have also taken the necessary national measures, including legislative measures, to combat that scourge effectively and to support international efforts to combat it.

Manifestations of extremism in the region are often based on politicized pretexts that serve the narrow interests of certain groups. Such groups misrepresent the true Islamic religion and use it as a cover for their deeds, thereby threatening the forces of moderation and projecting an incorrect image of Islam to the world. In that regard, His Majesty King Abdullah II, in his Amman message, called upon all Muslim nations to project the proper image of Islam.

As we are about to celebrate the first decade of the auspicious reign of His Majesty King Abdullah II, we are very proud of the great achievements made during his reign and look forward to even greater achievements in the years ahead. During that decade, Jordanian participation in peacekeeping operations expanded, reaching a cumulative total of 60,000 men and women who have served in 20 missions on four continents. That contribution reflects our serious and unreserved commitment to enhancing international peace and security.

By the end of 2008, our economy will have doubled in size since a decade ago. Per capita income will have grown by 65 per cent. Exports and investment will have increased threefold. Jordan has implemented ambitious reform plans towards the liberalization of foreign trade and the enhancement of the business environment. We have strengthened the programmes and institutions of good governance and political development, enhanced the role of women and the protection of human rights, combated corruption and made breakthroughs in the areas of health and education. The Government is also carrying out ambitious programmes towards political, economic and social reform and development in accordance with the national agenda, with a view to achieving a better future for the country. This is of particular importance because young people represent 60 per cent of our population.

In spite of all those efforts, programmes and successes, successive crises in our region continue to present great challenges to our development process. Those challenges are exacerbated by the severe current economic crises and increased prices of food and fuel, leading to increased inflation of about 15 per cent. Here I would like to reaffirm that international efforts to address economic challenges should take into account the voices of countries such as Jordan so that all may benefit from international efforts to address the challenges of the international economic, food and energy crises, in particular through programmes and mechanisms that take into consideration the specific situations of those States.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Win (Myanmar): We live in an era when the world is becoming increasingly interdependent. Nothing illustrates this interdependency more than the Asian financial crisis of a decade ago and the current financial crisis gripping the world's largest economy. The problems may have local roots, but, given the severity of the situation, their effects will transcend borders. The world economy, and by extension the

stability of nations, depends on the stability of the financial markets.

In recent months, the world has also been challenged by the soaring prices of fuel and food, particularly such staples as rice. Those daunting challenges add an extra burden to developing countries. The answer to those problems lies not in multiplying the number of world summits and conferences but in taking concrete actions towards implementing the commitments made.

My own country has the potential to contribute to energy and food security in our region. We are willing to do our part. We are making concerted efforts to produce more crude oil and natural gas to meet the needs of the domestic market as well as for export. We also have huge potential to produce hydroelectric power. Moreover, as the agriculture sector is the mainstay of Myanmar's economy, we are focusing on expanding the cultivation of paddy, beans and pulses. We have also introduced new industrial crops, such as jatropha, for use in the production of biofuels.

Developing countries like my own need to have a level playing field in order to promote the economic prosperity and social progress of our people. Subsidies and protectionist policies distort markets and do great harm to developing countries. Political and social progress can be achieved only through development, never through coercive economic measures. Such measures only serve to worsen the plight of the people, particularly the most vulnerable among them, women and children.

Unilateral sanctions have been imposed on my country. Those sanctions are unwarranted. Unilateral sanctions are also against international law. They are not only unfair but immoral. They are counter-productive and deprive countries of their right to development and do not function as a solution to solve the problem.

Myanmar has abundant land and natural resources with which to make a meaningful contribution to the energy and food security of our country and beyond. But in order for us to fulfil our potential we need unfettered access to markets. We need modern technology; we need investment. The sooner the unjust sanctions are revoked and the barriers removed, the sooner the country will be in a position to become the rice bowl of the region and a reliable source of energy.

That brings me to the matter of making the United Nations an Organization better suited to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Only a more democratic Organization will be able to respond to the needs of Member States and serve the interests of the international community as a whole. Reform of the Organization, particularly reform of the Security Council, has been on our agenda for some time. However, progress has been extremely slow. The role and authority of the General Assembly as the principal deliberative and representative organ must be enhanced, including in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Reform of the Security Council has eluded us for over a decade. Myanmar believes that the membership of the Security Council should reflect current reality. We believe in an increase in the membership of the Council in both the permanent and the elected categories. Reform should not be confined to an increase in membership but must also include improvement in the Council's working methods. Above all, it should result in a Security Council that is transparent, credible and democratic.

Here, I would like to stress that attempts to initiate formal or informal discussions in the Security Council on situations that do not constitute a threat to international peace and security are contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Charter. This is a view that Myanmar shares with the Non-Aligned Movement, which constitutes a clear majority of the membership of our Organization.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000 are imperatives that the international community has set for itself. We have now passed the midpoint, but progress has been uneven. Much more remains to be done if the Goals are to be achieved by 2015. While national Governments have the primary responsibility to ensure progress, the international community must help by creating an environment that will enable developing countries to turn faltering steps towards development into firm strides. Fulfilment of official development assistance commitments, increased investment flows, improved market access and resolution of the debt problem are needed to enable the developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

For its part, Myanmar is striving to promote better living standards for its people. The implementation of

the MDGs is inextricably linked to the implementation of our national development plan. The national plan focuses on the promotion of equitable and balanced socio-economic development of both rural and urban areas. In recent years, we have made significant progress in areas such as poverty alleviation, the promotion of health and education.

In the health sector, Myanmar has been implementing a national plan that accords priority to the eradication of major diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The high-level multisectoral committee on AIDS has been overseeing HIV/AIDS prevention and care activities in our country since 1989. The activities undertaken by the committee include active surveillance, prevention of mother-to-child transmission and community, institution and home-based care services. These activities are carried out by the Government in close cooperation with international organizations such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the World Food Programme, and with national and international non-governmental organizations in order to reach out widely to vulnerable groups.

As a result, Myanmar has not only levelled the rate of HIV/AIDS infection but also reduced it. I would like to emphasize that if we are to achieve a more dynamic and effective global response to HIV/AIDS, adequate resources must be made available. Moreover, allocation of resources for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis must be based on need rather than on political considerations.

With regard to education, we envision a system for our people that will generate a learning society capable of meeting the challenges of the information age we live in. Long-term investment in the education sector is being made with the aim of building human resource development. The Government has been expanding the number of basic, primary, post-primary, middle and high schools throughout the country in order to provide access to education for all. We strongly believe education to be a fundamental requirement for the attainment of sustainable development. It is also a prerequisite for the achievement of other MDGs.

I am happy to be able to say that, as a result of our efforts, the literacy rate of those 15 years old and above has risen to 94.8 per cent. Likewise, the rate of enrolment in primary schools has reached 98 per cent.

Myanmar also accords priority to creating job opportunities in rural areas as part of its poverty alleviation strategy. In that regard, development projects to improve economic, educational and health conditions in rural areas are being implemented all over the country.

The Secretary-General's initiative to convene today's Ministerial Meeting on Reducing Disaster Risks in a Changing Climate is indeed timely. We in Myanmar can relate to the growing concern of the world regarding climate change and its adverse effects. We felt the full brunt of the devastating consequences of climate change last May, when a powerful cyclone slammed into the Ayeyarwaddy delta. Cyclone Nargis left unprecedented death and destruction in its wake. The pain and sorrow felt by the survivors of the devastating storm continue even today.

There is, however, a silver lining in the dark clouds. The Myanmar nation was united in its response to the emergency. The outpouring of generosity was overwhelming. People from all walks of life, regardless of their own difficulties, donated, in cash and in kind, for the victims. The United Nations, States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, donor countries, non-governmental organizations and individuals from around the world also responded generously. We have been able to demonstrate willingness and ability to work in concert with the international community. We have been able to rebuild better and stronger homes, schools and monasteries. The paddy fields destroyed by the storm have been replanted.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation to our friends from far and near who came to our assistance in our time of need.

Myanmar is home to over 100 national races, and national unity is of paramount importance. Accordingly, we have been resolutely pursuing a policy of national reconciliation. Our endeavours have resulted in the return to the legal fold of 17 armed groups. We have effectively put an end to the decades-long insurgency. Peace and stability now prevail in almost all parts of the country.

We have also been implementing a seven-step political road map to democracy. The representatives of former armed groups, together with the representatives of political parties, ethnic nationalities and other representatives, took an active part in the National

Convention process. The National Convention laid down the fundamental principles to be enshrined in a new constitution. Based on those principles, a new Constitution was drafted and was put to a nationwide referendum last May. The people of Myanmar overwhelmingly approved the draft constitution.

The fifth step of the road map, general elections, will be taken in 2010. Necessary measures are being undertaken for the elections. All citizens, regardless of political affiliation, will have equal rights to form political parties and to conduct election campaigns. The Government will make every effort to ensure that the elections are free and fair. The international community can best assist Myanmar's democratization process by respecting the will of its people, expressed in the recent referendum.

The daunting challenges of the twenty-first century can be addressed only through international cooperation. We can solve international problems of economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character only by working together. To do this, powerful countries should refrain from practicing hegemonic policies through either political or economic pressure.

In the global village in which we live, mutual respect, understanding and tolerance must be the values that we espouse. Let us work together to give our global village a peaceful and prosperous future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Phandu Skalemani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Skalemani (Botswana): I am delighted, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Your election to that high office is indeed a clear reflection of the strong confidence and trust that the international community has in you personally, and also in your great country, Nicaragua. I am confident that under your able guidance we will continue to build on the achievements of the sixty-second session in our efforts to advance our common global agenda towards a more just, secure and prosperous world. I assure you of the full support, cooperation and goodwill of the delegation of the Republic of Botswana in the discharge of your mandate.

I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the Assembly at its sixth-second session. We sincerely commend him for his sterling work and leadership, which enabled us to achieve critical milestones towards our common goals.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is an important event on our global human rights agenda. It is an occasion for Member States to reflect, individually and collectively, on how much progress we have made in our efforts to build a more just world order. The Universal Declaration embodies the aspirations of humanity for liberty, freedom and equality. It is a reflection of the human spirit to strive for a more perfect society in which individuals recognize the reality that creating the space for the enjoyment of individual human rights expands the horizons for society to realize its full potential.

In pursuance of this noble objective we must continuously strive to improve our governance in order to ensure that it is responsive to the wishes of the people. It should be borne in mind that, in the final analysis, it is the people in whom the sovereignty of any nation is vested. In that respect, it is imperative that the will of the people expressed in free and fair elections be respected by all political leaders. Heads of State or Government must avoid the temptation to change constitutions in an effort to prolong their stay in power, which often results in instability.

Botswana reaffirms its commitment to the ideals and purposes of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are determined to contribute to the promotion of respect for human rights at home and abroad. In doing so we are conscious of the need for international cooperation in the promotion of human rights. It is for this reason that Botswana is a State party to a number of human rights instruments, including the Rome Statute on the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

We fully support the work of that Court. As a country that strongly believes in the rule of law, we are convinced that there should be no political interference in the work of the Court. The International Criminal Court was established with the support of African States. We felt that it was necessary to address problems that confronted our continent. The Court is meant to serve a specific purpose and there should be no exceptions regarding what it can or cannot do.

Botswana is pleased that representatives of political parties in Zimbabwe finally signed an agreement in Harare on 15 September 2008. We welcomed that development, as it augurs well for national reconciliation, economic reconstruction and development in Zimbabwe. The effective implementation of the agreement should have a positive impact not only on developments in Zimbabwe but also on Southern Africa and the wider African region. This is a good beginning, and we encourage the parties to do all they can to make the agreement work. No party should attempt to obstruct the implementation of the agreement, as the political crisis that confronted that country following the 29 June 2008 presidential run-off election can be resolved only through the implementation of the agreement. Such a development would not be acceptable to Botswana. We call upon the international community to help the process to succeed by extending their goodwill and support to the Government and the people of Zimbabwe with much-needed economic, financial and technical assistance.

We must commend the former President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, for his hard work, commitment and determination in helping the Zimbabweans reach agreement. We also wish to pay tribute to former President Mbeki for his contribution to the attainment of freedom and democracy not only in South Africa but also in the wider African continent. We are grateful to him for his visionary leadership and his people-centred initiatives, whose primary objective was to build an African continent that is free, peaceful, democratic and economically prosperous.

As the international community, we have the collective responsibility to equip and make optimal use of our multilateral body, the United Nations, to search for fair and just solutions to global problems in order to contribute to the betterment of all humanity. Today, more than ever before, the United Nations is required to respond effectively and swiftly to the complex challenges of the twenty-first century. Conflicts, poverty, disease, natural and man-made disasters, climate change, energy and terrorism are among the myriad pressing problems that confront humanity and require an urgent global response. It is thus imperative that we continue to make concerted efforts to address those challenges in pursuit of a better tomorrow. Their magnitude clearly requires multilateral strategies and solutions.

Botswana calls upon all Members to unite in the search for solutions to those problems. It is imperative that in our policies, actions and pronouncements, we always seek to build greater international understanding. In our approach to managing relations between States, leaders are called upon to set a higher standard. The language that we employ in international forums should not be belligerent or provocative, nor should it be calculated to shame or humiliate other leaders. Member States should not host military or rebel groups that operate from their territories against their neighbours.

In our international discourse, we must aim to build and facilitate agreement on common goals. In that respect, we must exercise restraint by avoiding the often frequent temptation to recall diplomats from each other's capitals, including purely for solidarity reasons. Such action is unfortunate and outdated, as it only leads to a breakdown in communication.

As we meet here, let us always remind ourselves of the solemn commitments that we, as the peoples of the world, have undertaken to end war and human suffering. Botswana calls upon all States, especially the major Powers, to set an example by refraining from the use of weapons in resolving conflicts. Military confrontation is, unfortunately, always a demonstration of the failure of the will to use diplomacy, of the urge to show off military superiority or of the inability to employ resources and technological advances to improve human lives.

Sustainable economic growth, development and the eradication of poverty are central to our development agenda as developing countries. Poverty is undoubtedly one of the most critical challenges facing our people. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and combating poverty in its many dimensions are interrelated and mutually reinforcing objectives. Thus, their attainment should be our primary preoccupation.

Botswana welcomes the initiatives introduced by some development partners that seek to take a more focused approach to Africa's economic and development problems. Those initiatives include the Lomé Conventions and the successor arrangements between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States, on the one hand, and the European Union, on the other; the African Growth and Opportunity Act of the United States; the Tokyo International Conference on African

Development; the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation; and the Africa-India Framework for Cooperation.

Botswana has always made effective use of the resources made available by our cooperating partners. It is important that more be done to help developing countries embark on the path of sustainable development. We are convinced that, as we receive much-needed assistance, we must envisage a day and time when there will be no need for such assistance because we are all able to stand on our own.

This year marks the midpoint towards the 2015 target for attaining the Millennium Development Goals. We thank the Secretary-General for his analytical and informative reports regarding progress in the implementation of our common commitments and our shared future. We also welcome the work of the high-level meetings held to take stock of progress made. That will no doubt provide impetus for the expeditious implementation of our commitments.

The Secretary-General's reports indicate a mixed and uneven score. It is clearly evident that while we have made real progress in some areas, much remains to be done over the next seven years if we are to achieve our goals. In other words, we are seriously behind schedule on every target, among countries and within countries that need to eradicate poverty and reduce human suffering.

In addition to revealing gaps, the process has highlighted emerging challenges that hinder the attainment of targets across the spectrum of human development. It has also emphasized the serious need to fast-track the pace of implementation if we are to have any notable impact. The achievement of those goals is our shared responsibility. It is thus imperative that all of us, individually and collectively, do our part to accelerate progress towards a better quality of life for our people.

Our people deserve a life free from fear and want, in an environment that offers equal opportunity for all. That is not a privilege, but a fundamental human right that each State has a duty to respect, protect and fulfil. For our people, that should mean universal access to education, health, shelter, clean water and infrastructure, as well as living in a safe and secure environment. Fully honouring our commitments is the key to realizing those expectations.

The following facts should trouble our collective conscience. More than one quarter of the children younger than 5 in the developing world are underweight. That amounts to 143 million underweight children in developing countries. Children in developing countries continue to die from preventable diseases such as malaria. The approximately 4 billion cases of diarrhoea per annum cause 2.2 million deaths, mostly among children under 5. Approximately 6 million people are blind as a result of trachoma, a disease caused by lack of clean water combined with poor hygiene practices. In sub-Saharan Africa, a woman's lifetime risk of maternal death is a staggering 1 in 22, compared with 1 in 8,000 in industrialized countries. Finally, HIV is spreading faster than we can provide universal access to prevention, treatment, support and care.

Clearly, closing those gaps will entail more than our reaffirmations; it urgently necessitates sustained and strong political commitment and leadership; sound and appropriate national policies, matched with increased official development assistance and technical support from the international system; stepped-up participation and combined efforts by Governments, civil society and the private sector; fairer, transparent and inclusive international trade regimes; more global partnerships to assist developing countries; full implementation of debt-relief initiatives; greater access to markets; and other innovative international support measures to finance development.

The search for global peace and security remains a matter of vital interest to my delegation. While we may have made significant strides in promoting peace through conflict prevention and resolution, through post-conflict recovery and through peacebuilding, conflicts continue to flare up, thus making the restoration of peace a remote possibility for some in the world.

My own continent, Africa, plays host to a large number of conflicts. The scourge of war has claimed many lives and caused untold human suffering. Substantial time, energy and financial resources have been expended, with little or no success. The United Nations Charter implores us, as the international community, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war by employing all diplomatic efforts and tools at our disposal.

I am pleased to note that commendable strides have been made in placing some countries, such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, on a firm path of national reconstruction, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. Regrettably, the peoples of Africa continue to face hunger and death in the Darfur region of the Sudan, Somalia and Chad, among other places.

My delegation is particularly concerned about the ever-worsening situation in the Darfur region of the Sudan. It is disconcerting that armed hostilities continue, despite the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union through the development of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. We call on the parties to commit to political dialogue in the search for lasting peace and to fully utilize the good offices of His Excellency Mr. Djibril Bassole, who has recently been appointed to facilitate the peace process.

With respect to Somalia, Botswana welcomes the signing of the Djibouti Agreement on 9 June 2008 by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia. We call upon all Somali political forces to commit to an all-inclusive political process so that the long-suffering people of Somali can also live in peace.

My delegation further calls on the international community to continue assisting the people of Somali with much-needed humanitarian aid. In the same vein, we remind the political leaders of the Somali people to put the interests of the people of Somalia above their own, so that the focus can be on the search for a lasting political settlement to the problems facing their country.

The success of the United Nations in delivering on our expectations and common ideals must be matched by adequate resources, appropriate mandates, structures and policy guidance. Botswana strongly believes in the instrumentality of the United Nations. In that regard, we are committed to paying our assessed contributions in full and on time. We therefore call upon all Members to do the same, so that this machinery, which is the motor that powers multilateralism, does not run out of steam.

There can be no doubt that any organization — and the United Nations in particular — must be constantly reformed or renewed if it is to continue to be relevant and responsive to the needs of its members. We are pleased that there has been some measure of progress in implementing the set of reforms mandated by the 2005 World Summit.

Allow me to conclude my remarks by once again calling on each and every one of us to live up to the high expectations of this Organization by honouring our commitments. Botswana reaffirms its abiding faith in this body, which unites the peoples of the world for a higher purpose. It is our hope that as we meet here, we will succeed in building greater international understanding across regions, cultures, language and faiths, because we are all human and because of the humanity of others.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Chad.

Mr. Mahamat (Chad) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to most warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. The delegation of Chad is convinced that your qualities and experience in the area of international relations will ensure success for our current session, and we would like to assure you of our cooperation as you carry out your mission. I would also like to express our gratitude to your predecessor for having skilfully and insightfully steered the work of the Assembly at its sixty-second session. I also pay a well-deserved tribute to our Secretary-General, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, for his commitment to upholding and promoting the ideals of our Organization.

The sixty-third session is being held at a time when the world is facing many challenges. The armed conflicts affecting essentially all continents are compounded by the food, energy and financial crises that endanger the most vulnerable populations. Those recurring crises are genuine handicaps to implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to which the international community has committed itself.

Chad, like many other countries, found itself early on in an adverse political, social and economic situation, despite the implementation of its national growth and poverty reduction strategy. That strategy, which was updated in 2008, is, however, the best framework for cooperation geared towards pooling all national and international efforts that are essentially aimed at achieving the MDGs. To be sure, the Millennium Declaration was welcomed in its time as a

major step in the international community's awareness of the considerable lag of many of its members with respect to development.

The Declaration and the MDGs, which we adopted in 2000 to eradicate poverty by 2015, are today still the most appropriate response to the problems of poverty that many countries, including my own, continue to face. Those problems include shortfalls in terms of the .esources necessary to fund our programmes, but also, and particularly, the unrest that has resulted from the many attempts at destabilization and that is worsened by incursions of mercenaries and armed militias of all kinds. The most notable of such incidents took place in April 2006 and February 2008.

To be sure, the development of our oil, which began in 2003, has given the country additional resources. But those resources do not, unfortunately, meet our needs. Outside assistance is therefore necessary in a number of areas in order to build our capacities to better meet the challenges of poverty.

Contributions by our partners — although we would like to reiterate our gratitude to them and commend their commitment to us — need to be adapted. Such contributions should, as a priority, be aimed at building the country's ability to take action, in particular by developing its natural wealth, and should provide more substantial financial and technical support in that context.

More flexible conditions with respect to easing the external debt of poor countries are indispensable. Greater attention should also be given to the economic problems facing developing countries, specifically those in Africa, where the future of some could be threatened by the lack of competitiveness of their export products because of measures taken by their competitors in the North. My country hopes that the outpouring of solidarity that underpinned the launching of the MDGs process will be revived in order to reduce inequalities, which worsen poverty and which are ultimately sources of tension, with unpredictable consequences. At any rate, Chad continues to be determined to do its utmost to improve the living conditions of its people within the framework of the MDGs.

I would like to commend the efforts of our Organization in eradicating hotspots of tension that are major obstacles to the implementation of development goals. The Darfur crisis is an example of that, due to the burden that it has placed on Chad as a result of its economic, social and environmental repercussions. The presence in eastern Chad of 290,000 Sudanese refugees and 180,000 displaced Chadians is a matter of major concern, for both Chad and for the international community. We welcome the international community's unprecedented mobilization in that regard.

Nevertheless, the fate of the host populations should be given greater attention, in order to restore the balances that were upset by that massive inflow. In that in that part of the world a true tragedy is occurring, and it weighs on our collective conscience. I would like to issue here a heartfelt appeal for a lasting solution to that crisis.

Furthermore, my country welcomes the extension by the Security Council of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Chad is persuaded that the international community, having assessed the suffering of the people of Darfur, will strengthen the operational capacities of UNAMID by providing it with all the appropriate resources so that it can effectively carry out its mission and establish the necessary conditions for a comprehensive and lasting settlement to the crisis.

We believe that it is essential to recall here that, since the crisis broke out in Darfur, my country has spared no effort to assist its Sudanese brothers in finding a peaceful settlement to the conflict facing them. In August 2003, His Excellency Idriss Deby Itno was the first foreign head of State personally to travel to El-Fasher to express his solidarity and support for his Sudanese counterpart, Omer Hassan Al-Bashir, while calling on the Sudanese rebels to lay down their arms and agree to a political settlement. We would recall the decisive role he played as mediator to reach many peace agreements between the Sudanese Government and its opposition.

Similarly, aware of the close linkage between stability in Chad and the settlement of the crisis in Darfur, he has always worked for the normalization of relations between the two countries. It is in that spirit that the Government of Chad welcomed the decision of the Sudan to restore diplomatic relations with Chad at the meeting of the Contact Group tasked with implementing the Dakar Agreement, held in Asmara on 12 September.

At that time, the Government of Chad called the Contact Group to witness the sincere commitment of the two parties towards a lasting normalization of their relations. Here, I reiterate the gratitude of the Government of Chad to the member countries of the Contact Group, institutions and friendly countries for the key positive roles that they continue to play in supporting Chad and the Sudan on that path.

From this rostrum, we would like to commend the close cooperation among the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), the European Union-led peacekeeping force and the Government of Chad. The strengthening of the mandate of MINURCAT offers new prospects for developing relations between Chad and the United Nations, taking into account the experience accrued during the preceding mandate. The need for greater effectiveness of the international presence in Chad requires dynamic cooperation between the various parties.

Despite the repeated attacks of mercenaries, the repercussions of which on the life of the nation have been devastating, the Government of Chad, under the impetus of His Excellency Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic and Head of State, remains committed to pursuing political dialogue with the democratic opposition and with the armed movements in order to bring about national harmony. The tangible results of that policy are the formation on 23 April 2008 of a broad-based Government, led by Youssouf Saleh Abbas, which includes leading personalities from the democratic opposition. We are also pleased to note the return to legality of several members of the armed movements under the Sirte agreement of 25 October 2007.

We confirm that the political dialogue, initiated by the agreement of 13 August 2007 and briefly interrupted by the tragic events of February 2008, has resumed its work. It is taking place in a climate of trust and understanding and naturally will continue, with the assistance of our partners, towards the holding of free and transparent elections. Here, I would like to reiterate very solemnly to those partners the gratitude of the Government and people of Chad for their valuable support in facilitating that dialogue.

After that overview on national political issues, we would like to address some international challenges facing our Organization.

The setback in the recent negotiations in Geneva raises questions with respect to the ability to establish a just and equitable global trade system that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of developing countries, the most vulnerable in the world economy. What is more, despite the efforts of the international community to reduce tensions and spare the world the horrors of armed conflict, unfortunately we continue to see theatres of confrontation emerge on all continents. The unbearable sight of thousands of women, children and elderly people displaced or cast into exile in the wake of those conflicts should persuade the international community to be more responsible.

Armed conflicts and the atrocities they cause are a breeding ground for terrorism. That scourge is another challenge to and major concern for the international community. My country supports the efforts of the United Nations to fight for its complete eradication, but also for greater justice in addressing international issues.

On issues concerning nuclear matters, we reaffirm our country's unswerving position, which is to respect the sovereign will of States to acquire nuclear power for civilian purposes.

With respect to conflicts on the African continent, we are pleased to note the joint efforts of the African Union and the United Nations to settle them peacefully and enduringly. Thus, we welcome the normalization of the political and military situation in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and the Comoros. In the Horn of Africa, Chad supports the efforts of the African Union to restore peace and national harmony in Somalia. In Zimbabwe, we welcome the political agreement reached between the primary Zimbabwean political players thanks to the mediation of President Thabo Mbeke, to whom we pay well-deserved tribute.

In conclusion, within the framework of reform of the bodies of the United Nations, and more particularly the Security Council, I should like to reiterate the urgent appeal of my country to the Assembly and to the members of the Security Council for a just and fair reform that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of the African continent.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Basile Ikouebe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and La Francophonie of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes your inspired election, Sir, to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session, which is being held at a particularly important moment in the life of our Organization, given the numerous challenges that we have to face. The robust messages that you yourself have issued here clearly indicate that you are fully aware of the magnitude of what is at stake. As is so well suggested by the Secretary-General in his report on the activities of the Organization (A/63/1), more than ever before the world's problems require concerted and coordinated actions.

We commend the Secretary-General on the resolute action that he has undertaken since the beginning of his mandate. We highly appreciate his dynamism, his realism and the increasing interest that he brings to matters of peace, security and sustainable development.

His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, who was unable personally to attend this general debate, has instructed me to share with the members of the Assembly a few thoughts on developments in our world.

The challenges that we have to tackle immediately are numerous. They are related to peace, security, and threats to people's lives and to nations, heightened by the food, energy and financial crises, as well as natural disasters and climate change.

By placing emphasis on the notion of solidarity, which we fully support, you have certainly illustrated, Mr. President, the risk we run of losing our identity, an option that can only offer partial, even uncertain, solutions to the challenges that confront us. Here, we reaffirm that the United Nations offers us the ideal framework to work together in search of lasting solutions. That is the meaning underlying our ongoing attachment to multilateralism.

Recent events in different parts of the world, particularly in Europe, remind us that peace and security rest on a fragile foundation, even where such matters seem to have been solved definitively. Africa, still at the heart of the concerns of the international community and top of the agenda of the Security Council because of the conflicts that continue to jeopardize progress and to hinder implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), will not solve its problems with declarations of good intentions.

The high-level meeting on Africa's needs that was held on 22 September revealed that it is time to move from promises to sustainable action. That is why we welcome the adoption of the declaration that marked that important event. Similarly, we salute the high-level meeting for the MDGs that concluded here on 25 September.

As we all know, the stabilization of the situation in countries in conflict and the building of peace in others would not have been possible without the sustained efforts of the United Nations and other bilateral and multilateral partners. The African Union and subregional African organizations continue to act resolutely and often with limited resources to meet those challenges. Thanks to all such efforts, the Central African Republic, to cite the example of our neighbouring country, is working to restore peace and security through dialogue among the Government, the opposition and rebel movements.

Still with respect to our subregion of Central Africa, we call on the international community to step up its efforts to help stabilize the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly by supporting the Government of that country in its fight against rebel movements and other negative forces. In that context, the entry into force in June of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region will usher in a new climate of confidence in that nerve centre of our continent. My Government is committed to fully playing its role in that process, which will greatly contribute to stabilizing to the situation.

With regard to the crisis between Chad and the Sudan, we encourage those two countries to pursue every effort to normalize their relations and consolidate peace in the region. In that regard, we welcome the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries — an initiative that must be consolidated through the establishment of military monitoring units along the common border. Those units need to be adequately equipped, in implementation of the Dakar Agreement signed in March 2008.

As African Union co-mediator with Libya in that crisis, Congo will spare no effort in helping to bring those two brotherly countries to respect the engagements undertaken and to act always in good faith in order to establish a definitive peace between and around them.

Solving the conflict in Darfur would contribute largely to that end. That is why we make an urgent appeal for the effective deployment of the troops of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which should be supplied with all necessary equipment to become operational and efficient.

For its part, my country recently completed the preparatory phase for a police unit composed of 140 personnel that is now at the disposal of UNAMID. However, the international community should also work tirelessly to implement of the Abuja Agreement on Darfur. Non-signatories who are violating that Agreement must be strongly pressured to return to the negotiating table. In that context, we believe that it is counterproductive to carry out the indictment against the Head of State of the Sudan.

With respect to Africa yet again, we welcome the settlement of the crisis in Kenya and the process of reconciliation in Zimbabwe, and call on African political actors in power and in opposition to respect the verdict of the ballot box.

In its desire to participate in the collective effort in the area of peace and security, my country reaffirms its full commitment to the fight against terrorism, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, drug trafficking and human trafficking. Congo remains fully committed to strict compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in all its facets.

Congo calls on the international community to consider as a matter of urgency the resolution of the Middle East conflict on the basis of commitments already undertaken, particularly the road map of the Quartet and the Arab peace initiative.

Our commitment to multilateralism leads us to believe that there is a pressing need to pursue the work of United Nations reform, and particularly that of the Security Council. In keeping with the African position on that issue, my country welcomes the decision to launch, before 31 January 2009, intergovernmental negotiations that should finally enable that matter to genuinely move forward.

It is right that our present agenda includes the matter of the effects of climate change on the environment, which is one of the major challenges of our times. My country is particularly sensitive to that issue since it has within its borders a part of the enormous Congo basin, the world's second ecological lung after Amazonia. The countries bordering the basin have a great responsibility to humanity in the management and sustainable exploitation of these ecosystems, which they are shouldering in a determined and encouraging manner.

While endorsing the conclusions of last year's Bali Conference, which laid the groundwork for the post-Kyoto period, the States of the Congo basin believe that global policies on the preservation of forest equilibriums should establish compensation mechanisms. Those would include the creation of substitute economies to benefit the populations in the areas involved.

In expressing those concerns, I take the opportunity to announce that Congo will host in Brazzaville, from 27 to 30 October 2008, the sixth World Forum on Sustainable Development, devoted to assessing the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, particularly concerning strategic, credible and pertinent partnerships towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

On the economic and social front, we welcome the focus at this session on sustainable development and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The analyses carried out here last week indicate that African States have made significant progress, with a rate of growth of approximately 6 per cent per annum, and that, as emphasized in the Secretary-General's report, Africa is resolutely on the right path and should continue to pursue those commendable efforts, particularly since it varies between countries and regions.

Nevertheless, such efforts and the promising outcomes they may yield require genuine, continuous and tangible international support. That is why our partners must keep their promises.

The current Chair of the African Union, President Kikwete of the United Republic of Tanzania, brilliantly described to the Assembly the situation in our continent and indicated the way forward. We fully endorse the presentation he made here and on other occasions. We welcome the different partnerships that Africa has established with its traditional friends and with new ones. Here once again, the commitments need to be brought to fruition.

Our continent is resolutely committed to the battle for progress, which has several facets. That is why we attach great importance to matters of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights in the framework of the African Peer Review Mechanism, a pillar of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Several African countries have agreed to submit to periodic evaluations that represent a sort of right to positive interference in the affairs of other member States in matters that normally fall under national jurisdiction. Congo has voluntarily subscribed to the process, illustrating Africa's devotion to the fight against bad governance, corruption, human rights violations and impunity.

It is therefore inconceivable that certain foreign judges should confer upon themselves the right to drag African leaders to their national courts in the name of the principle of universal jurisdiction — a rule that seems to be applied exclusively to Africa since, as we have already seen, the same principle was soon dropped when it targeted leaders of powerful States. It is regrettable that international jurisdiction, while remaining respectable, seems to be following a path of judiciary spite against African leaders.

In that regard, Africa has become an experimentation ground for dangerous and even hateful practices. The sad memories of such other negative experiences as slavery, the slave trade and colonization are enough for us. President Kikwete was right to raise this issue here, in application of a decision taken during the summit of the African Union held in Sharma el-Sheikh in Egypt.

The Republic of the Congo had a particularly rough patch in the 1990s and managed, thanks to the political will of the Government, all political actors and the civil society, to achieve national reconciliation. That climate of peace made possible the organization of legislative elections in 2007 and municipal and local elections in 2008 in an atmosphere of calm and serenity, despite irregularities identified during the voting process. Nevertheless, the transparency and credibility of the process were not disputed by the international observers.

With the irregularities corrected, it is in the same climate of calm and serenity that we are organizing the 2009 presidential election, in accordance with our Constitution. The climate of restored peace has led to an increasingly reassuring economic situation that is supported by improved budgetary planning and better debt management within the framework of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and the rigorous measures that today have enabled Congo to focus more ambitiously on its development and on the progressive achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Within that framework and in a participatory manner, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, we drafted a poverty reduction strategy paper that was approved by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

By way of illustration, the principle measures taken towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in the sensitive areas of education and health care focus on from free access to education and textbooks, the establishment of a drug purchase centre, the distribution of treated mosquito nets to the population, and free access to HIV/AIDS testing, checkups and anti-retroviral medication.

Such efforts, however encouraging they may be, can bear fruit in the long run only with the support of external partners and in a favourable international context as regards such thorny issues as debt, trade, official development assistance, financing for development and, above all, international peace and security.

Members may now easily understand why a modest member of the international community such as Congo is so deeply invested in the existence and the work of our collective home, the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Bakayoko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your outstanding election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Your personal qualities, your in-depth knowledge of our Organization and your great experience in international affairs have enabled you to gather around you the support of the entire Assembly and certainly augur well for the success of your work. I also extend my congratulations to the members of your Bureau. Please be assured that our warmest wishes will accompany you throughout the session, which, under your leadership, is sure to be crowned with success.

Allow me to pay fitting tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for his work as President.

I would also like to welcome Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and wish him every success as he attempts to accomplish his noble and lofty mission to consolidate and strengthen the role of the United Nations. My delegation and I assure him of our fullest cooperation and support as he seeks peaceful solutions to the problems of the world. I convey to the Secretary-General the deepest gratitude and the sincere thanks of His Excellency Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and the Ivorian Government for his personal involvement in solving the crisis in my country. The Ivorian people still recall his historic visit of 23 and 24 April to Côte d'Ivoire. My country will continue to support him and, through him, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire so that it may successfully accomplish its mission.

May I also express the thanks and gratitude of the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire to the international community, and in particular to the French Government, for their commitment and their efforts, through Operation Licorne, to restore peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

I take this opportunity once again to pay sincere tribute to the facilitator, Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso and Chairman-in-Office of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), for his untiring efforts on behalf of the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire, in particular in the framework of the follow-up mechanism of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement signed on 4 March 2007. My thanks also go to the heads of State of the African Union who spared no effort to resolve the crisis roiling Côte d'Ivoire since 19 September 2002.

I wish solemnly to reaffirm the determination of my country to emerge from the current crisis by organizing free, open and transparent elections. Attesting to our resolve was the launch on 15 September 2008, of the penultimate phase of the electoral process, which consists of identifying the voting population and individual voters.

The efforts of the international community to ensure the return of peace to Côte d'Ivoire — relying on regional organizations such as ECOWAS and the African Union, pursuant to President Gbagbo's approach to resolving conflicts — are gradually bearing fruit and giving rise to improvements in the security situation throughout the country. For that reason, my country would be grateful if the United Nations could take into account the new situation and once again consider lowering its security index for Côte d'Ivoire.

In the same vein, my country would like to see the Security Council sanctions committee accede to its request, made on 26 September 2007 from this very rostrum, for the lifting of individual sanctions imposed on a number of Ivorian citizens. Allow me also, in the framework of the reorganization of the new Republican Army called upon to maintain public order and security, to appeal once again for the partial lifting of the arms embargo, as requested by President Laurent Gbagbo on that same occasion.

More than ever before, our Organization must show that it is able to maintain international peace and security throughout the world. In that context, as was indicated by President Laurent Gbagbo at the high-level debate on the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, this universal Organization must open broad new avenues for peace in the world. Indeed, the United Nations, as an instrument prepared at the end of the Second World War to guarantee international peace, is no longer adapted to the current world. Therefore, as wished by a number of Member States, the reform of the United Nations is necessary, and we must clarify its goals and its missions.

That is why my delegation feels that, after years of work and reflection on United Nations reform, the time has now come to bring the process to a close. Unfortunately, with regard to the reform of the Security Council, although there may be a consensus on the need to increase the number of members of the Council in order to make it more broadly representative, there are still differences with regard to its composition, the extension of the right of veto to potential new permanent members, and the improvement of its working methods. In that respect, my country reaffirms its adherence to the African Common Position on that matter.

The persistent search for peace will be in vain if we do not bring greater justice to international economic relations. In other words, there will be no genuine peace so long as intolerable differences remain in the living conditions between various population

groups, on one hand, and between developed and developing countries, on the other.

In that respect, I welcome the efforts undertaken by a number of countries to promote economic cooperation between them and the countries of Africa. Examples include cooperation with the European countries through the European Union; with Japan through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development; with China through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation; with the United States through the African Growth and Opportunity Act; and with India and Turkey through their respective partnerships.

Economic globalization was meant to open new horizons for international cooperation, but overall it has not been beneficial to developing countries because of the fragile nature of their economic structures. It would therefore be an illusion to imagine that market forces alone can help the development of the poorest countries. We must therefore regulate trade by adopting rules agreed at the global level, because only a fair international trade system can contribute to the expansion of underdeveloped economies.

In that respect, my delegation deplores the failure in July of World Trade Organization negotiations that should have breathed new life into international cooperation and created conditions for developing countries to benefit from globalization through trade and investment.

The issue of debt remains a cause for concern to a number of developing countries. That is why I would like to welcome all the praiseworthy initiatives undertaken to alleviate its effects on the economies of those countries.

The recent food crisis, whose devastating effects are being felt in several countries, requires the international community to go beyond mere promises and to act together, taking specific innovative and courageous actions and measures that can, above all, bring hope to the situation and find a global response to a problem that has become global.

In that regard, I welcome the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and the efforts of developing countries to come to the rescue of those in their countries who have been the most seriously affected by the food crisis.

My country also welcomes the implementation of the Centres of Excellence project carried out by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, aimed at strengthening South-South cooperation scientific research in the agricultural field. With that in mind, President Laurent Gbagbo recommends the creation of a solidarity-based mechanism through which exporting countries would provide food to importing countries and the establishment of a United Nations food stabilization fund.

The energy crisis being felt throughout the world, in addition to its negative effects, is demonstrating once again the fragility of the economies of a large number of countries. Although the development of biofuels seems to be a good alternative to fossil fuels — which, much to our consternation, are running out — we must also ensure that their production is not carried out to the detriment of agriculture, the main purpose of which is to feed the people of the world. That is why, in the interest of current and future generations, we must think carefully and deeply about the adoption and development of new, renewable sources of energy.

With regard to all of the crises and difficulties that humanity is facing, now more than ever before the international community must translate into action the idea of solidarity and cooperation, as contained in the Charter of the United Nations, in order to restore credibility to the Organization. Such solidarity should be demonstrated first and foremost by the implementation of the commitments undertaken by the industrialized countries to devote at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance.

To that end, I would like to welcome all initiatives aimed at helping developing countries in general, and African countries in particular, to overcome their current economic situation. The diligent implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the main goal of which is to fight poverty, is part of such an approach. It is on that note of hope that my delegation calls on the international community to seek solutions to current challenges in a United Nations that is more democratic and that responds to each and every one of its Members.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nur Uulu Dosbol, State Secretary of Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Dosbol (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the post of President of the General Assembly and wish the work of the sixty-third session every success under your guidance. I should like to express deep gratitude to Srgjan Kerim for successfully steering the work of the Assembly's previous session.

Today, the role of the United Nations as the universal international forum that can make an important contribution to strengthening international peace and security is seen as increasingly important. The high-level plenary meeting on Africa's development needs and the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) gave us every reason to believe that joint efforts can generate appropriate measures for existing crises and this session of the General Assembly will serve as an additional contribution towards achieving the MDGs.

In today's conditions, when there are rapid changes worldwide, enhancing the role of the United Nations and the effectiveness of its work is increasingly important. Further strengthening the authority and potential of the Organization in the present situation requires that we pursue reform of the entire United Nations system, so that it can, above all, act as the guarantor of international peace and security and also effectively and flexibly respond to existing problems.

For us, the most important issue is strengthening the Security Council in the cause of preserving international law and order and tranquillity. In advocating expansion of Council membership and, the enhancement of its working methods, the Kyrgyz Republic believes that Council reform must be based on the principles of universality, effectiveness and equitable geographic representation.

For its part, the Kyrgyz Republic will continue to contribute as much as it can to maintaining peace and security. In that regard, we would like to reaffirm that for the first time our country has put forth its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2012 and 2013. Realizing the true breadth of responsibilities of members in that key body of the United Nations, the Kyrgyz Republic will do its utmost to address global problems.

The rapid changes taking place in the world have not bypassed the Kyrgyz Republic. Such challenges as climate change and the food and energy crises have highlighted the extreme importance of collective efforts, both regional and global. Such circumstances clearly heighten the role of the United Nations and other, regional organizations in consolidating efforts to work out effective mechanisms for preventing and responding to challenges and threats.

As is known, the water resources of Central Asia come from the high alpine glaciers and snowfields in Kyrgyzstan. However, at the beginning of this year we were already encountering the consequences of warming and of a period of water scarcity, which negatively impacted the delivery of electricity to both domestic and external markets. The environmental situation is also aggravated by the fact that in our country earthquakes, landslides and flooding have recurred in recent years and in such conditions the fact that our country has a considerable number of storage sites for radioactive waste poses a serious threat not only to national, but also to regional security.

As international experience demonstrates, peace and security cannot be maintained without establishing the elementary conditions that are necessary for a decent existence. In order to achieve security and development goals simultaneously, the international community must pursue a more balanced policy. Particular attention should consistently be given to issues of law and order in society.

From this rostrum, I would like to thank all United Nations Member countries for their unanimous support for the initiative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kurmanbek Bakiev, on declaring 20 February as World Day of Social Justice. The pursuit of policies of social justice is aimed at sustainable development of the human potential and at enhancing the interaction of States in order to eradicate poverty, achieve gender balance and to address migration issues.

We are grateful to Member States for their support at the previous Assembly session for resolution 62/196, on sustainable mountain development, under which Bishkek will hold the second Global Mountain Summit in October 2009 to assess the activities of the international community with respect to sustainable mountain development. I take this opportunity to reiterate our invitation to interested countries to take part in that international forum, and also to express the

hope that Members will provide active support to that initiative of the international community.

I would like to touch upon several issues that are at the centre of attention for the delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic. Most unfortunately, there are still radioactive waste storage sites in the Kyrgyz Republic. Properly maintaining them and preventing a regional environmental disaster stand high on the agenda. We are grateful to the United Nations Development Programme, which has seriously paid attention to the need to solve that problem. I am confident that at the international forum on resolving issues of the storage of uranium tailings, to be held in Bishkek this autumn, the international community, under the United Nations coordinating role, will take effective measures, including financial and technical assistance, aimed at ensuring their security.

We would also like to express firm support for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, since that would contribute to strengthening global and regional security. In that regard, we hope to receive the broad support of the international community for the related draft resolution at this Assembly session.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the international community is going through a complex period. Member States must reaffirm their readiness to seek practical solutions to the most pressing problems of our time. The international community rightfully expects that we all will work out effective measures to strengthen the United Nations in order to find ways to resolve the challenges of the new millennium. Therefore, we need to do our utmost, so that the current session of the General Assembly will be remembered as a session of reform.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Giadalla A. Ettalhi, chairman of the delegation of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to express my country's heartfelt congratulations to you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. We are confident that your experience and wisdom will crown our work with success and will result in further progress on the many important issues on the Assembly's agenda.

I would like also to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for the efforts he made during his presidency of the General Assembly at its previous session. Our thanks go also to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his persistent efforts to implement United Nations resolutions and realize the purposes of the Charter.

Humanity faces many problems and serious challenges, which, no matter how great, would not be impossible to resolve if we evinced the necessary political will and made concerted efforts to overcome them. My country recognizes that peace, security and stability constitute the cornerstone of progress and development, especially in Africa. It has therefore made all possible efforts to resolve disputes in Africa, as was the case in Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan. My country has also contributed, along with other African countries and pursuant to resolutions of the African Union Peace and Security Council, towards putting an end to the insurgency in the island of Anjouan in the Union of the Comoros.

United Nations reform remains a matter of primary importance to the international community. Reform has indeed become a necessity dictated by the current dynamics in the international arena. However, while we commend the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform, which was chaired by the President of the General Assembly during its previous session, we feel that the process has been extremely slow because of broad differences between the various groups. Nonetheless, we welcome the consensus reached on the recommendations of the Open-ended Working Group at the end of the sixty-second session (decision 62/557). However, we believe that genuine United Nations reform is reform which places decision-making power in the hands of the General Assembly, the world parliament, while transforming the Security Council into an executive body that enforces the Assembly's decisions. We can thus surmount the veto obstacle which has concentrated international decision-making power in the five permanent members of the Council.

My country therefore calls for the convening of a high-level General Assembly meeting on United Nations reform, to be held in a European country so that all world leaders can attend. In that context, we wish to emphasize that Africa, which is the only continent with no permanent representation on the Security Council despite the fact that it represents more

than one fourth of the total membership of the United Nations, deserves permanent membership on an equal footing with other geographical regions. That representation should be given to the African Union rather than to any one of its members.

We have reached the midpoint of the period set for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We express our concern regarding the inability of many developing countries and least developed countries, especially in Africa, to achieve the Goals, we affirm that it is imperative for the international community to fulfil its commitments in the field of development assistance, address problems related to the international trade system, make the World Trade Organization more effective, and facilitate the accession to membership of that organization by developing countries.

In that regard, we welcomed the convening of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 22 September 2008, on the theme of Africa's development needs. We support the political declaration adopted at the meeting (resolution 63/1). We also welcomed the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), held on 25 September 2008. Furthermore, we look forward to the international follow-up conference on financing for development to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha and we hope that the Conference will achieve its desired goals.

In that context, my country has contributed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through its proposed "Qadhafi Road" across the desert, which will connect the northern parts of the African continent with the western and southern parts. It will be an important artery that will enhance trade among the continent's countries.

Corruption, bribery, money-laundering and the smuggling of funds from illegal sources are among the major factors which hamper development and the achievement of the MDGs in developing countries, especially in Africa. Huge damage is inflicted on developing countries as a result of the smuggling of funds across borders, which deprives those countries of the benefits of those funds, which are deposited in foreign banks. As the General Assembly has emphasized in its decisions, those funds should be returned to countries of origin. I must also note that there are safe havens that have always been associated with banking confidentiality, to the point where they have become known as corridors for criminal money-laundering and safe havens for stolen funds and plundered wealth.

It is no longer acceptable to remain silent on those safe havens, whose financial institutions provide protection for money generated from corruption and crime. Those funds are often used by terrorist groups and organized crime gangs to threaten the security and stability of States.

My country was among the first States to highlight the food crisis. The High-Level Conference on Food Security, held in Rome in June, was a responsible response from world leaders to the food crisis and the unprecedented increases in the prices of food, basic commodities and energy. I would like in that respect to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization for their efforts in that field.

To confront that problem, my country has adopted development projects and programmes which aim to achieve food security through improved investment in the agricultural sector and through support for farmers. In the African sphere, my country has allocated $5 billion to finance several development projects in order to achieve food security in a number of Sahelo-Saharan African States. It is also in the process of financing seven additional projects in African countries.

The food crisis has been a topic of personal concern for our brother Muammar al-Qadhafi, the Leader of the Revolution, who in June, at the tenth session of the summit conference of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, held in Benin, presented his initiative for the provision of food and the mitigation of the hunger crisis in Africa. The initiative is based on the establishment of a self-sustaining mechanism and the harnessing of modern machinery and technology to reclaim lands and farm vast areas in Africa, through the launching of a green campaign. The campaign will make it possible to farm vast areas of land in the Sahelo-Saharan States by mechanized means instead of traditional methods.

Developed countries can help Africa find a solution to the food crisis by increasing agricultural development assistance and investment in projects such as hydroelectric dams and development projects in lake

areas, such as Lake Chad. Such investments will make a great contribution to agricultural development on the African continent.

Climate change and its negative impact will hamper the development efforts of many developing countries and will undermine their development gains. Libya is among the States affected by climate change, as it is located in an arid/semi-arid geographical area, and most of its territory is desert. Libya also suffers from desertification and water scarcity. Libya has made persistent efforts to address these challenges, including through the Great Man-Made River Project network, which is intended to overcome the problems of desertification and drought.

Confronting climate change requires an effective and well coordinated international effort, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility agreed upon in the Rio Conference. From that perspective, we call for accelerated efforts to reach a comprehensive international agreement to address the root causes of climate change and to provide adaptation measures to developing countries.

We believe in the purposes of the United Nations Charter, which calls for the establishment of a world in which peace and security prevail. The elimination of weapons of mass destruction is an essential factor in building confidence and promoting world peace, stability and security, and my country has voluntarily relinquished all its programmes to develop internationally prohibited weapons of mass destruction, while emphasizing the right to use atomic energy for peaceful purposes. But we strongly oppose the use of double standards on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation. We condemn any discrimination between one State and another in this respect and call for making the Middle East a region free from all weapons of mass destruction.

The Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines should be reviewed to reflect the concerns of many countries, such as requiring States that lay landmines to remove them and to address the inflicted damage, including by providing treatment and compensation for the injured and by rehabilitating the damaged environment.

Terrorism remains a matter of concern for all members of the international community. Despite all the measures taken to combat terrorism, thanks to international cooperation under the United Nations umbrella, this issue still poses a challenge to the international community and is an obstacle to the achievement of development, security and stability in many parts of the world.

Eradicating this phenomenon requires the adoption of a specific definition of terrorism. Terrorism must not be confused with the legitimate right of peoples to resist foreign occupation and claim their right to freedom, independence and self-determination. Furthermore, associating terrorism with any specific religion, nationality or culture is bound to inflame conflict among civilizations, religions and cultures. Such a situation is untenable and is incompatible with the goal of international relations based on mutual respect among States, cultures and systems of government. In this regard, we wish to point out that policies and practices of foreign occupation based on violations of human rights guaranteed by all international instruments and conventions constitute one of the worst forms of terrorism in our modern world.

The United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951, provides an ideal definition of refugee status, in addition to the definition included in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is therefore regrettable that some States use this concept to camouflage their intentions regarding other States. Under the pretext of fostering democracy and respect for human rights, which is a noble goal, those countries have opened the door of political asylum to all seekers, including thieves, smugglers of their countries' wealth, fugitives from prosecution and terrorists, enabling them to continue their subversive activities against their home countries. My country believes that it is of paramount importance to establish international criteria and controls governing political asylum, while carefully observing human rights. We also believe that such criteria and controls would have a positive impact on the fight against corruption and terrorism while promoting democracy and preventing armed conflict.

The Palestinian people are still suffering under the Israeli occupation, which has lasted for more than 60 years, subjecting Palestinians to the worst forms of occupation and destruction directed against civilians. The achievement of peace and stability in the area is impeded by the unjust siege imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the continuation of settlement activities

on occupied Palestinian territory, ignoring and deliberately breaching the principles of international humanitarian law and the principles of human rights, coupled with policies of home demolition, land confiscation, the displacement of populations and the intensification of arrests.

Indeed, peace and stability in the area can only be attained through the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland and the establishment of a democratic State on the land of Palestine in which Arabs and Jews can live, enjoying full rights and obligations, as our brother, the Leader of the Revolution, proposed in his recent book.

My country has always emphasized that there can be no comprehensive peace in the Middle East unless the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese territories is ended. In this framework, we reiterate our call to the international community to demand and enforce the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from all occupied Arab lands and to ensure that their rightful owners are compensated for damages suffered as a consequence of that occupation.

My country welcomes the tangible improvement in the security situation in Iraq and believes that stability in that fraternal country depends on the achievement of genuine national reconciliation which would overcome sectarian and religious differences and lead to the withdrawal of foreign forces.

We express our deep concern at the situation in Somalia. My country is of the opinion that the international community should expeditiously dispatch forces to that country, in coordination with the African Union, to protect civilians and humanitarian workers and to assist in the implementation of the Djibouti Agreement, in order to put an end to the long suffering of the Somali people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa, chairperson of the delegation of the Republic of Ecuador.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am highly honoured to address the Assembly on behalf of the Government of the citizen revolution, of the President of Ecuador, Rafael Correa Delgado, and of the people of Ecuador at these paradoxical times of both crisis and hope.

Allow me to convey the fraternal greetings of the people and the Government of Ecuador to you, Sir — President of the Assembly and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann — on your election to such an important position. We agree with you on the need to attach the highest priority to the fight to eradicate poverty and to pay special attention to relevant issues such as climate change, the energy and food crises, human rights, disarmament, the rights of women and children and the preservation of cultural and biodiversity.

With the end of the cold war, we believed, not without reason, that the confrontation between two ways of life and two great Powers would give way to the solution of the planet's pressing economic and social problems. Two decades have elapsed since that historic date, and we see with concern that that crisis has deepened, that social cohesion is harder to obtain, that new threats to security have intensified, and that the use of force and the number of conflicts have increased.

My country is convinced that the strengthening of the multilateral system is an imperative in the world of today. We have no other option to guarantee peace and security in the world than to renew our political decision to progress in the reform of the United Nations system, and in particular of the Security Council. This year, we have taken a significant step in that direction with the General Assembly's adoption of decision 62/557, which provides a general framework to advance these negotiations. Let us hope that we make progress.

The debate on the need to increase membership of the Security Council and to democratize the Council and make its working methods more transparent and inclusive is undoubtedly one of the fundamental elements of the reform process. However, at the same time, we should not forget that another of the central points required to give back to the United Nations the role that it should have is to strengthen its democratic and representative organ par excellence, namely the General Assembly.

Nor should we forget that any process of reform will be incomplete if it does not include the democratization of the organizations that make up the United Nations system. In the twenty-first century we cannot continue working with a system in which most countries cannot access the decision-making bodies

because of structures that respond to the special circumstances that prevailed when those bodies were created. We need to urgently build a multilateral system that responds promptly and effectively to today's challenges and that recognizes the fundamental principles of international law, such as the sovereign equality of States. Only with thorough-going reform can the United Nations regain the lead role that it should play in international affairs.

We cannot understand that States Members of this Organization continue supporting peacekeeping budgets of billions of dollars and yet have serious concerns about increasing budgets for development programmes, especially fundamentally important programmes to fight poverty, HIV/AIDS, malaria and the effects of climate change. Our citizens are beginning to call us to account with regard to the resources that we contribute annually to this Organization and the results that we obtain. That is why we consider positive the proposal stressed by the President of the General Assembly to commence a truly thorough and democratic reform of this Organization.

To work for development and the reduction of poverty and to deal adequately with the needs of millions of human beings who are struggling today in misery, disease and despair, is an absolute requirement in order to guarantee peace and security. Therefore, my country assigns high priority to economic and social policies aimed at overcoming unequal distribution of income and employment, and at guaranteeing the right of its population to health, education and social security. These efforts must be accompanied by decisive and effective support from developed countries, through a substantial increase in official development assistance (ODA) — cooperation that cannot be subject to conditions of any kind and that must supplement national efforts based on sovereign development policies.

There is still much to do, however, if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As we have stated in several forums, Ecuador considers that the MDGs are basic minima for survival and that we should go beyond them. In our country, we have left behind an outdated concept based on market growth indices and are currently working actively and with impressive results on increasing the quality of life of the citizens of Ecuador. We call this concept of "*buen vivir*" — "living well" — which means living with dignity and in accordance with our cultural values and in harmony with nature.

Ecuador and, I am sure, all developing countries hope that the Doha Conference on Financing for Development will produce positive results for our countries, such as access to external financing for development, relief of the external debt servicing burden, the reform of international financial institutions and the effective alignment of official development assistance with the national strategies and policies adopted by sovereign countries, together with the strong commitment of donor countries to allocate at least 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to official development assistance. Middle-income countries deserve special attention since they account for more than 41 per cent of the poor of the planet.

The United Nations should actively promote South-South cooperation. We believe that the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation to be convened by the General Assembly in 2009 is evidence of the role which the Organization should play in this area. It will constitute an excellent opportunity to strengthen and enhance this important cooperation.

Likewise, it is necessary that there be a special place for economic and social development in the work of the United Nations. Without a total fulfilment of the commitments that have been undertaken and without a true inclusion of our needs based on our own agendas for development, we cannot talk of international peace and security.

Ecuador wishes to highlight, at this juncture, the vital role that the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) have to play on these and other issues. During the last NAM ministerial meeting, held in Tehran, Iran, in July, we reiterated our conviction that this important mechanism of political agreement is central in ensuring that our countries' interests are fully taken into account.

Ecuador also assigns importance to the role of the United Nations in establishing a world order based on respect for international law, the norms and principles set out in the Charter, and the promotion of and respect for human rights international humanitarian Law.

My country supports the actions the United Nations is taking to address the serious security

problems we face, such as the fight against terrorism, the worldwide drug problem and the fight against transnational organized crime. Accordingly, we welcomed the recent positive outcome of the first review of progress in the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. My country will continue to give its support to these important initiatives.

Ecuador also supports negotiations aimed at the eventual adoption of a legally binding convention on terrorism. However, we believe that, given the vitally important implications of the issue, such a convention should expressly and unequivocally cover the obligations of all States to fight terrorism in the framework of international law, human rights, international humanitarian law and the principles and norms established in the Charter of the United Nations.

The fight against terrorism cannot be an excuse for some States to feel released from their obligation to respect fundamental norms of international law, such as respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of other States and non-intervention in their internal affairs. Likewise, the violation of the human rights of alleged terrorists — who have been tortured, incarcerated in clandestine military prisons and deprived of the basic right to defend themselves — also constitutes a very serious precedent. These practices must be condemned by the international community. Sovereignty, the inviolability of territory, the non-use of force and non-intervention in the affairs of other States are the only guarantee for peaceful coexistence among the peoples of the world.

Ecuador assigns high priority to the actions of the international community to ensure that States comply in good faith with their human rights obligations. We believe that the Human Rights Council, which is consolidating its position as the best mechanism for the preservation and protection of human rights, has substantially improved its working methods. But all countries must make an effort to set aside their political objectives to allow the Council to effectively fulfil the purposes for which it was created.

Ecuador feels that the Universal Periodic Review system established by the Council is a good step in that direction. For this reason, my country was glad to be the second country in the world to submit its review, in April 2008. On that occasion, we reiterated our unfailing commitment to respect for and protection of human rights. We were able to share with the international community the substantial advances made in the implementation of our national human rights plan, and we voluntarily made additional commitments.

The adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was a milestone. My country was actively involved in the negotiation of that important instrument and is now committed to its implementation and follow-up in order to contribute to national policies aimed at consolidating the identity, culture and effective exercise of the political, economic and cultural rights of the indigenous peoples and nationalities of Ecuador.

The issue of migration is of singular importance to my country. The Government of Ecuador is therefore implementing a comprehensive immigration policy, contained in the National Human Development Plan for Migration, that includes programmes, projects and actions aimed at guaranteeing the protection and a comprehensive approach to migration issues and of migrant persons, regardless of their origin or administrative status within the territory of a State.

The free movement of persons is a right that must be protected, and I believe that no Government represented here is opposed to that. However, the regulation of such movement must be in strict accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law and the human rights of migrants. In the words of the President of my country, Rafael Correa Delgado, "there are no illegal human beings, only practices that violate the rights of persons". In that respect, we are deeply disturbed by the return directive issued by the European Union. We believe that, today more than ever before, our countries must join together to demand effective compliance with the obligations arising from international human rights and on migration agreements. Emigration and return must both be an expression of freedom.

The new Constitution of Ecuador establishes the principle of universal citizenship, the free movement of all peoples on Earth, and a progressive end to the concept of "foreignness" in order to transform unequal relations between countries, especially between the North and the South. We must not forget that migration is often a direct consequence of economic models based on exclusion, in which the market, the accumulation of wealth and selfishness paper over the true needs of human beings.

As I said, humanism and solidarity are fundamental principles that guide the actions of the Government of Ecuador. That is why my country adopted a State policy on refugees on 16 September of this year. That policy is aimed at providing comprehensive assistance to persons placed under the protection of Ecuador.

We will honour all our national and international commitments regarding refuge seekers, but we need the determined cooperation of the international community. We must not forget that Ecuador is currently the country with the largest number of persons in need of international protection in the entire western hemisphere. According to studies conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are approximately 200,000 Colombian citizens in need of international protection within the territory of Ecuador. Ecuador is now implementing a process of extended registration, which will benefit thousands of Colombian brothers in urgent need of international protection.

The severity of the world food crisis is an issue that our countries must address in a comprehensive manner while taking all of its dimensions into account. In that respect, Ecuador believes that subsidies and other trade distortions have a serious impact on the agricultural sectors of developing countries. For that reason, Ecuador firmly supports the proposal to hold a special session on that issue during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

In addition, Ecuador is compelled to highlight the current financial crisis, which also deserves our Organization's particular attention. The crisis is further proof of the decline of our current economic system, which prioritizes speculative capital over productive capital, threatens the common good and endangers the development prospects of the majority of world. It is not a country-specific crisis, but a systemic crisis of capitalism that calls for profound and comprehensive responses.

Ecuador's foreign policy reflects its firm commitment to disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Ecuador has not only adhered to international instruments in that field, but also supports and carries out all the obligations emanating from those instruments in order to achieve their effective implementation. We are concerned by the fact that there are countries that, regrettably, have not adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, while others that have adhered to it are not meeting their obligations, especially in terms of disarmament and the destruction of their arsenals. With regard to that policy issue, Ecuador welcomes the adoption, in Dublin in July, of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. My country will sign the Convention in a ceremony to be held in Oslo on 3 December 2008.

Other issues of great concern to my country include the fight against transnational organized crime and its ramifications, the production and illicit traffic of narcotics, corruption, the manufacturing and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, and human trafficking. We believe that the United Nations has taken decisive steps on those issues by adopting international conventions that allow for cooperation between our countries in the fight against those scourges. We believe that adequate and equitable international cooperation is essential. Such cooperation, as I said, must respond to the needs of our countries and be aimed at supporting national policies.

Ecuador is convinced that a strong and effective multilateral system is the only means for the world to overcome the problems it faces and, above all, to guarantee the well-being of peoples and international peace and security. It is therefore incumbent upon us to transform the United Nations.

To conclude, I have the pleasure of announcing to the world that Ecuador has made a new step towards the strengthening of our democracy. Yesterday, the Ecuadorian nation approved by an ample majority a new political Constitution — a new social pact based on a transformed relationship between the State, the economy and politics, creating a new model of development aimed at human welfare and harmony with nature.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carsten Staur, chairman of the delegation of Denmark.

Mr. Staur (Denmark): My Government agrees entirely with the Secretary-General's remarks at the opening of this debate. The world is on the eve of a great transition. The problems we face have grown much more complex, and our challenges are increasingly those of collaboration rather than confrontation. The quality of life in most parts of the world has improved tremendously over recent decades,

but challenges remain, not least in sub-Saharan Africa. New challenges, such as climate change, migration, increasing energy and food prices and financial instability, could all potentially give rise to embedded conflicts and further polarization.

As President Sarkozy said last week in his capacity as President of the European Union (EU), continued reform of the United Nations is crucial to improving the ability of the United Nations to carry out its core business, which is and remains problem solving. We must continue the progress made on system-wide coherence and on the Delivering as One agenda. As regards Security Council reform, Denmark welcomes the agreement to initiate intergovernmental negotiations in the near future. At the election of Security Council members next month, Iceland is the candidate for membership representing all the Nordic countries. We are strongly backing Iceland's candidature.

On climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports have served to crystallize an international consensus on the need for action. That consensus has been nurtured by the determined leadership of the Secretary-General, promoting global action to curb global warming, with the United Nations at its centre.

Economic growth and environmental protection are fully compatible. The challenge is to establish a framework for low-carbon growth, in which increased energy efficiency, increased use of renewable sources of energy, carbon capture and storage, and the development of a global carbon market are vital elements.

Denmark will host the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009. The goal is to reach an agreement on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, making it an ambitious and truly global instrument. Momentum for a new comprehensive and ambitious international climate agreement is growing day by day.

During the past weeks, we have witnessed new cruel and meaningless acts of terrorism. The evil terrorist attack in Islamabad on the Marriott Hotel on 20 September resulted in the loss of many innocent lives. Most of those who died were Pakistanis, but other nationalities were also included, one Danish person among them. That attack and others came only a few weeks after United Nations Member States had reaffirmed their commitment to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We must respond to such despicable acts of fanaticism with great determination to strengthen international cooperation in that area. All United Nations bodies must join in the fight against terrorism. We hope that, at its present session, the General Assembly will finally agree to a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. In addition, we must focus on due process and sanctions, as it is becoming increasingly clear that a lack of adequate due process is hampering the efficiency of the sanctions system.

Sixty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, severe violations of human rights continue to take place. Extremists are trying to instigate a clash of civilizations by creating mistrust and polarization among various civilizations, cultures and religions. It is a major challenge for the United Nations to counter those trends and to promote the universality of human rights.

The number of armed conflicts is steadily decreasing. The United Nations has played a major role in ensuring that positive trend. However, several bloody and difficult conflicts remain high on the international agenda.

In Afghanistan, measurable progress has been made, but the security situation remains challenging. Corruption and drugs are undermining the achievements made and the long-term development of the country. Denmark has significantly increased its engagement in the United Nations-mandated, NATO-led mission, and we have doubled our development assistance to Afghanistan. Much has been achieved, but the United Nations needs to play a much stronger role in coordinating the international engagement. A lack of success in Afghanistan would have serious regional ramifications.

In Africa, the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur has been delayed owing to various factors, including actions by the Government of the Sudan allowing attacks and killings to go on. Those responsible for the grave crimes committed in Darfur must be held accountable. Fighting impunity is a prerequisite for sustainable peace. We thus stress the need to comply with Security Council resolution 1593 (2005) and express our strong support for the International Criminal Court.

In Zimbabwe, we hope that the power-sharing agreement will pave the way for durable peace and a return to democracy and rule of law, ending the suffering of the people of that country.

In Somalia, the international community is trying hard to improve the deplorable situation on the ground and the prospects for a long-term political solution. The scourge of piracy is one of the factors undermining stability in Somalia. The Danish navy is taking an active role, together with the navies of other nations, in addressing that problem off the coast of Somalia and in the region. We need to increase our common efforts to address all aspects of fighting piracy, including strengthening the international legal framework for handling detained persons. Through the Copenhagen Process Denmark has taken the lead on the broader issue of handling detainees in armed conflict. We believe that there are already valuable lessons here that can also be applied in relation to piracy.

In the Middle East, in spite of continuing violence, effective regional and international diplomacy has contributed to breaking the political deadlock in Lebanon. The Palestinians and the Israeli Government are also making progress. We urge the parties to the Middle East conflict to honour road map commitments and to settle their differences in accordance with the international agreements and the Arab peace initiative. I should also like to take this opportunity to strongly condemn the unacceptable remarks made by the President of Iran calling for Israel to be wiped off the map.

In Burma, Cyclone Nargis killed more than 100,000 people earlier this year. The slow and inadequate reaction of the regime demonstrated its disregard for the welfare of its own people. The United Nations is working hard to ensure the initiation of a genuine political dialogue between the Government and the political opposition as well as the release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. We strongly support those efforts.

In August, war erupted in the South Caucasus. The conflict in Georgia has not only dramatically affected the region but clearly also entails repercussions that go beyond it. However, not least because of the European Union and its French presidency, the international community has been able to contribute constructively to the process. Now it is up to all parties to the conflict to fulfil the conditions set out in the six-point agreement and the Moscow agreement and to act in a positive spirit to find long-term solutions to the conflict in a peaceful manner that also respects Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

This year saw a new country appear in the Balkans. The United Nations has played a substantial role in promoting Kosovo's development and is still present in Kosovo with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), together with a new substantial contribution from the EU regarding the rule of law: the European Union Rule of Law Mission Kosovo. By reconfiguring UNMIK, the United Nations has demonstrated substantial pragmatism and a willingness to cooperate actively with the EU. Later this year, the United Nations is expected to hand over to the EU Mission tasks related to the rule-of-law area, and we welcome that development.

The good offices of the Secretary-General, the mediation and conflict prevention efforts of the United Nations and its peacekeeping operations, which now entail 19 missions and more than 130,000 staff members, remain the backbone of United Nations peace and security efforts. However, we need to improve the capacity of the United Nations system to assist countries in early phases of recovery after conflict as well as countries with very weak institutions that might easily fall into conflict. That means building a stronger bridge from humanitarian assistance, political good offices and peacekeeping efforts to early recovery, peacebuilding, reconstruction and transitional assistance aimed at sustaining State-building and preventing weak States from lapsing back into conflict or chaos. The creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund was important in strengthening the Organization's capacity and capability to build and cross that bridge, but so far it is only a footbridge. Much more engineering and craftsmanship are needed, including on the part of funds and programmes.

At the 2005 World Summit, the concept of the responsibility to protect was endorsed. We must develop that concept further and ensure that States do their utmost to protect their own citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We must discuss what the international community and the United Nations can do to assist States in meeting those obligations, and we

must consider the means that are available to the international community when States manifestly fail to protect their populations.

Last week, an impressive number of heads of State and Government took part in the first high-level follow-up to the Millennium Declaration and the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are not on track, but we are not sidetracked either. We all have to make extra effort if we are to succeed, and we need to get our priorities right. A special focus on the empowerment of women is essential socially, politically and economically. Increased investments in women are crucial across all the MDGs, across all sectors. Gender equality is a basic human right, and it is smart economics, too. On that basis, the Danish Government has initiated a specific call to action on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Another cross-cutting factor that might determine success or failure for all countries is governance. Political leadership, democratic institutions, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are called for not only nationally, but also internationally. The international rule of law, with a strong emphasis on respect for the fundamental principles of international law, respect for human rights and fighting impunity, is a key to international peace and stability. The evidence is loud and clear, and we need to focus our efforts.

The evidence is equally loud and clear in another area. Sub-Saharan Africa is lagging behind in its trajectory towards achievement of the MDGs. The Danish Government has therefore established an international high-level commission on effective development cooperation with Africa. The aim of the commission, in which a number of African leaders and United Nations officials are taking part, is to present creative and concrete recommendations regarding a cross section of young people, employment and economic growth. By May 2009, the commission will present its ideas and concrete proposals on how African countries and the international community can address those challenges prior to the 2010 review of the status of the implementation of the MDGs.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm the interrelationship and interdependence of the issues that I have addressed. There can be no development without security and human rights, and vice versa. Progress is needed in all areas if we are to advance as a global community. And we must advance — in the area of development, in the area of peace and security, in the area of human rights and in the many areas that transcend borders. That can be achieved, however, only through multilateral cooperation in areas such as counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, pandemics and climate change. Multilateralism is our only response to the challenges, risks and opportunities of an interdependent and globalized world. It is our responsibility to ensure that the United Nations is properly equipped to address global challenges and global opportunities.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.